

# The Religious Significance of the Full Moons



**Alec Robertson**





# The Religious Significance of the Full Moons

BY

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and *Buddhist Attitude to*  
*Christianity*).

With a Foreword by

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*(The gift of truth excels all other gifts.)*

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May the merit accruing from the publishing of this  
book

**“The Religious Significance of the Full  
Moons”,**

ensure the Blessings of the Triple Gem showering  
health, happiness and prosperity upon them.

**Ven. Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero**

27.11.1999

## **HOMAGE TO THE BUDDHA BY SABHIYA ON HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE**

Ending, transcending Ills,  
Cankerless Arahāt,  
thy insight, light, and lore,  
have brought me safe across !

For marking my distress,  
for freeing me from doubt,  
I laud thee, sage benign,  
consummate master-mind,  
great Kinsman of the Sun !

The doubts I had are solved by thee, O Seer,  
O All-Enlighten'd sage immaculate!

With ev'ry perturbation rooted up,  
unfever'd, tranquil, strong in Truth are thou !

Great Victor! Paragon ! Thy words rejoice  
all gods, all Nāradas, all Pabbatas.

I hail thee noblest, foremost of mankind;  
nor earth nor heaven holds thy counterpart !

Enlighten'd Master ! Over Māra's hosts  
triumphant! Sage, who, wrong propensities  
uprooting, for thyself salvation found  
and taught mankind to find salvation too!

Thou hast surmounted all that breeds rebirth  
and extirpated canker-growths within !  
With naught to bind thee thrall to life, thou'rt free  
as forest lion from all fear and dread.

E'en as a lotus fair to water gives  
no lodgement, thou by good and bad alike  
art unaffected. Stretch thou forth thy feet,  
O Victor ! I salute my Master's feet !<sup>1</sup>

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1. From 'Buddha's Teachings' (Sutta Nipāta), translated by Lord Chalmers (Harvard Oriental Series).





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## FOREWORD

I have great pleasure in writing the Foreword to Mr. Alec Robertson's latest book on "The Triple Gem and the Uposatha".

It is indeed very creditable that Mr. Robertson has spared no pains in doing immense research to collate all facts known about the religious significance of the Full-Moons. This has enabled the publication of his third outstanding work and this coupled with the fact that there is no such compendium, written in English so far should commend itself as a very useful book of reference to the English speaking Buddhist World and to non-Buddhists as well who are interested in acquainting themselves with some aspects of the Dhamma.

The author has therefore rendered an unique service in fulfilling a long-felt need amongst English speaking Buddhists the world over who are eager to know why the Full-Moons are so very significant to Buddhists. This scholarly work is more than a mere narration of the events associated with the Full-Moons. He has in a masterly manner collected material from the various sources of the Pali Canon and Commentaries relating to subjects, such as The Buddha's unique powers (Five Visions, Ten Powers, Special Knowledges, Omniscience, Buddha's Significant Contribution to Modern Thought, etc.), Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, Nibbana, Meditation—Its techniques and methods, Subjects of Meditation, Its Benefits, The Importance of Abhidhamma and its Unique contribution to Modern Thought, Significance of Buddhist Rituals and a host of other important Buddhist doctrines pertaining to its ethics, culture and observances.

Mr. Robertson has been known to me for over two decades now and is certainly no stranger to Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike who have listened to his Radio talks or read his learned articles in the press and various journals

at home and abroad. His articles have been acclaimed by scholars all over the world. He is one who has been in constant demand as a speaker on the Dhamma at gatherings of various organisations—both religious and secular. Some of his articles translated into Sinhalese have appeared in various Buddhist journals. He is indeed a self-educated Buddhist scholar who is never tired of studying the Dhamma despite his household duties and official career, his childhood Christian environment notwithstanding. His untiring efforts in the furtherance of the cause of the Dhamma which alone can solve human problems in the widest sense have now been crowned with this masterpiece dealing with the Significance of the Full-Moons in all its aspects which have direct association with the Triple Gem—Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

Mr. Robertson has recently been unanimously elected as President of the Servants of the Buddha Society, Colombo, founded in 1921, and he is also a Deputy Director of the Middle Path International Society for the dissemination of the Dhamma amongst foreigners resident in Ceylon.

I have perused with extreme delight, sometime ago, the scholarly ability evinced in the illuminating work entitled "Is Nibbana Extinction?" written by Mr. Alec Robertson in 1962 with a foreword by no less a person than the late Venerable Paravahera Vajiranana Maha Thera, Ph.D. Cantab., an outstanding erudite scholar and Emeritus Vice Chancellor of Vidyodaya University of Ceylon.

The concentrated, sustained and laudable effort of many years of research has fructified in the publication of this masterpiece, which in the words of Venerable Dr. Paravahera Vajiranana Maha Thera, is the most lucid exposition of Nirvana which he had come across written in English. Nibbana, which is unconditioned, timeless and spaceless, has to be realised with diligence and no words can therefore adequately describe this Supreme State which is *ipso facto* so very difficult to comprehend.

It is gratifying to note that Dr. Robert H. L. Slater, Emeritus Professor of World Religions, Diyinity College,

Harvard has acknowledged the eminence of Mr. Robertson's contribution to the cause of the Dhamma as expounded in his first book on such a lofty subject. His scholarly brilliance matched with an unflagging devotion to the Triple Gem has resulted in the present work.

We are living today in a world full of turmoil, torn asunder by the devastation of two world wars with the prospect of a third world war looming large before us which it should be everyone's effort to try and prevent by the dissemination of the Dhamma as preached by Gautama Buddha twenty five centuries ago. The light of the Dhamma beckons the world to deliver itself of craving, greed for self or national aggrandisement, hatred and delusion. For hatred ceases not by hatred but by love alone.

May "The Triple Gem and the Uposatha" commend itself in disseminating thoughts of loving-kindness towards all beings and ensure lasting peace and goodwill amongst all nations irrespective of race, caste, creed or colour.

MAY ALL BEINGS BE HAPPY.

WITH METTA TO ALL.

BALANGODA ANANDAMAITREYA

Colombo, March 30, 1971.





## PREFACE

The present work is the product of several years of research into the Pali Canon, Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries. My research has enabled me to gather useful and valuable material regarding the salient qualities of the Triple Gem, and the doctrinal teachings and observances synchronising with the Full-Moons (Uposatha). I have ventured to unfold to the English speaking world an aspect of Buddhism that had hitherto not received the fullest exposition.

This book provides the reader not with a superficial narration of important events connected with the Full-Moons but with an analysis of the cardinal doctrinal teachings and observances associated with the Full-Moons. A fairly detailed exposition of these doctrines have been explained from the original teachings of the Buddha. The pre-eminent position that the Buddha occupies in the Buddha-Sasana has also been elaborately dealt with. His great qualities of Head and Heart and His unparalleled services as a teacher of gods and men have been depicted in detail in the chapters on Vesak, Medin and Navam.

The reader will be able to gather useful material on such doctrines as The Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, Nibbana, What happens to an Arahant after his Death?, Where is Nibbana?, Is Nibbana Extinction?, Meditation—Its techniques and methods, Subjects of Meditation, The different Temperaments, Its Practical relevance to the Modern World, The Importance of the Abhidhamma, Its unique contribution to Modern Thought, etc. from the chapters on 'Esala', 'Poson', 'Binara' and 'Vap'.

The religious observances and practices of a monk are explained in the chapters on 'Nikini' and 'Il'. The Buddhist concept of peace and tolerance is outlined in the chapter on 'Bak'. A vivid and graphic description of the place of

rituals in Buddhism is enumerated in the chapter on 'Duruthu'. The important place given to women in Buddhism and their contribution to the cultural, moral and spiritual aspects of Buddhism is given in the chapter on 'Unduvap'. The first two chapters are devoted to the religious observances and practices followed in connection with the Poya and the religious significance of the Poya or Uposatha in the Buddha-Sasana (Dispensation of the Buddha) is outlined in the first chapter.

The Sinhala word 'Poya' is derived from the Pali word 'Uposatha' which has as many as five meanings:

1. the day devoted to the special precepts of virtue in addition to those practised on ordinary days.
2. the day set apart for the recital of the Pātimokkha by monks and nuns.
3. the eight precepts of virtue to be practised by the laymen on the poya day.
4. the ascetic practice of fasting and the perfect purity of the Consummate Ones (Arahats).
5. the name given to a family of elephants.

Of these meanings, the first three are of significance to the Buddhists.

The Poya day was observed as a day of religious significance long before the time of the Buddha. Righteous men of ancient times had made it a practice to cease from worldly pursuits on one day of the week and instead to engage themselves in religious activities on this day. Since there were no calendars or diaries in use then, the days of religious significance were determined by the phases of the moon. During the time of the Buddha, ascetics of other faiths had set apart the Poya day for religious observances.

The story is told of how King Bimbisara approached the Buddha and said: "Venerable Sir, it is customary for people of other sects to engage themselves in religious activities on Poya days. This custom makes for concord among them



and for the mutual well-being of the ascetics and their lay-followers. Therefore, may the Blessed One ordain the observance of religious duties on Poya days for His followers too". The Buddha who never opposed the salutary practices of other sects directed his followers to assemble themselves on Poya days in āramas and to devote the day for good acts—kusala kamma. This is how the observance of religious duties on Poya days in Āramas came into being.

Though it was the practice in the Āramas of ascetics of other sects to expound their teachings to their followers on Poya days, there was no such activity in the Buddhist Āramas. Buddhists, who appreciated the usefulness of this practice began to point out this omission and when the Buddha heard about this complaint, He directed that apart from other religious activities, the expounding of the Dhamma should be done on Poya days. Thus was established the practice of Bana preaching in monasteries and temples on these days.

The Venerable Arahant Mahinda came to Lanka and preached not only the Buddha Dhamma but also taught Buddhist customs and manners to the Sinhalese. The Poya day became a day set apart for religious observances in Lanka too. Our history shows how our forefathers led by our kings, put away other duties on Poya days and took part in religious activities. There are lithic records to show that those who indulged in secular activities like trade on Poya days had been punished by our kings. It must be pointed out that the practice of keeping away from mundane activities on Poya days and taking part in spiritual activities on these days, a practice enjoined by the Buddha Himself, had been observed in Ceylon for over two thousand years.

My sincere thanks and gratitude are due to the Venerable Balangoda Ānandamaitreya Maha Nayaka Thera for his kindly and gracious Foreword. He is a very learned Thera with a thorough grasp of the Dhamma and well versed in the Pitakas and commentaries. It has been my privilege

and good fortune to associate with him. His valuable ideas and suggestions have always been helpful to me. I am also deeply indebted to the Venerable Madihe Pan-naseeha Maha Nayaka Thera and the late Mr. C. M. Austin de Silva for the material regarding the significance of the Poya and how it came to be recognised as a Buddhist practice and to my good friend Gunaseela Vithanage for permitting me to reproduce some extracts of his article on the Buddha—The Light of the World.

Venerable Mapalagama Vipulasara Thera, Chief incumbent of the Paramadhamma Chetiya Pirivena, Ratmalana, has given me much encouragement in the publication of this book for which I am grateful. My sincere thanks and gratitude are due to Hon'ble S. R. Wijeyetilleke, Judge of the Supreme Court Ceylon, for being so kind in going through the manuscript and making very useful suggestions which has enhanced this work. I must thank most profusely Mr. Austin de Silva, the editor of "The Buddhist World" for suggesting to me the writing of a series of articles on the Significance of the Full-Moons which appeared in his popular magazine "The Buddhist World" two years ago. The present work is the outcome of a more exhaustive and analytical study of those earlier contributions.

I must also thank my good friend Mr. Carl Perera for having done all the typing involved in this work and also for his useful suggestions. And last but not least my wife, who has been a Kalyāna-Mitta for many years and have helped me in the translation of my works into Sinhala which have appeared in the daily press and various Buddhist journals. She has also carefully perused the manuscript of this book and assisted me in proof reading.

In conclusion may this book of mine help my readers to gain some insight into some of the teachings of the All-Enlightened One which I am sure will stand them in good stead in their journey through sansāra until their final task is done with the attainment of the glorious state of Nibbāna.

MAY THE BLESSINGS OF THE  
TRIPLE GEM BE WITH YOU.

ALEC ROBERTSON.

72, Malwatte Road,  
Dehiwela, Ceylon.  
3rd May, 1971.



## RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF THE POYA DAY (UPOSATHA)

To Buddhists all over the world, the *Uposatha* or Poya Day is a weekly sacred day, and it is obligatory to observe it by keeping the precepts, betaking to meditation, listening to discourses of the *Dhamma* and indulging in various forms of religious activities conducive to the serene joy and pious emotions of the faithful. Buddhist astronomical ideas have developed in close relation with Hindu theories; hence in tracing the origin of the *Uposatha* we go back to *Vedic* times, when in Hindu society the word *Upavasatha* was used to denote the eve of the Soma Sacrifice, hence a day of preparation. With the rise of Buddhism in India the word *Uposatha* came to indicate the day preceding four stages of the moon's waxing and waning, viz. 1st, 8th, 15th and 23rd nights of the lunar months. The Buddhist calendarical system included twelve lunar months, viz. (1) *Citta* (March-April), (2) *Vaisāka* (April-May), (3) *Jettha* (May-June), (4) *Āsālha* (June-July), (5) *Sāvāna* (July-August), (6) *Potthapāda* (August-September), (7) *Assayūya* (September-October), (8) *Kattika* (October-November), (9) *Maggasira* (November-December), (10) *Phussa* (December-January), (11) *Māgha* (January-February), (12) *Phagguna* (February-March). In Sinhala these months are known as (1) *Bak*, (2) *Vesak*, (3) *Poson*, (4) *Esala*, (5) *Nikini*, (6) *Binara*, (7) *Vap*, (8) *Il*, (9) *Unduvap*, (10) *Duruthu*, (11) *Navan*, (12) *Medin*.

The early Buddhists utilized the *Uposatha* days for various important religious services. On the 15th day of the half-month, they held a chapter of the Order to expound the *Dhamma*. The *Sangha* also utilized one of the *Uposatha* days for the recitation of the *Pātimokkha* or Rules pertaining to the Order. On *Uposatha* days the Buddhist laity take upon themselves the *Uposatha* vows, that is to say, the observance of the eight silas during the day. The eight precepts are: abstaining from (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) sexual intercourse, (4) lying, (5) intoxicants, (6) taking food after mid-day, (7) dancing, singing, music,

unseemly shows, garlands, scents and unguents, (8) high and luxurious seats. The Uposatha day occurring in the middle of the month is referred to as *Catudassiko* or *Pannarasiko* as the month is shorter or longer. The *Sangha* may utilize an *Uposatha* day for holding an occasional *Uposatha* which is referred to as "*Samaggi Uposatha*" or *Reconciliation Uposatha*, which is held when a quarrel or dispute among the fraternity has been settled, the general confession of the *Sangha* forming as it were a seal to the reconciliation. The hall or chapel wherein the monks assemble on an *Uposatha* day to recite the *Pātimokkha* is called the *Uposathāgāra*, and the *Uposatha* service is generally known as "*Uposatha-Kamma*". Keeping or observing the *Uposatha* by laymen is referred to as "*Uposathan Upavasati*".

The sacred text of the *Anguttara Nikāya* or Book of the Gradual Sayings, records a discourse given by the Buddha to Visākhā on the keeping of the Uposatha, wherein the Blessed One extols the glory of observing the *Attanga Sila* or Eight Precepts, which win for men and women power in this world, and power and happiness in the next, and which ensures for them birth among the devas in the heaven-worlds. The Buddha explained to Visākhā the various forms of mental reflections to be fostered by one observing the *Ariyan Uposatha* or Ariyan Sabbath, which lead to purification and tranquility of the mind. As recorded in the texts the Buddha says "And what Visākhā is the Ariyan Sabbath? It is the purification of a soiled mind by a proper process. And how is it done, Visākhā? In this matter the Ariyan disciple calls to mind the Tathāgata thus: 'He it is the Exalted One, the Arahant, who is a Fully Enlightened One, perfect in knowledge and practice, a Wellfarer, World-Knower, unsurpassed charioteer of beings to be tamed, Teacher of Devas and mankind, a Buddha is the Exalted One'. As he thus bethinks him of the Tathāgata, his mind is calmed, delight arises, the soiling of the mind is abandoned".

"In like manner he proceeds to reflect on the sublime and noble qualities of the *Dhamma* and *Sangha*, one's virtues and the attributes of the deities (*devas*)".



The Buddha then proceeded to expound to Visākhā that the keeper of the sabbath may purify his mind by pondering on the virtues of the Arahants or saints. He recalls to mind how the great and mighty Arahats observe the Eight Precepts (*Attanga Sīla*) meticulously and scrupulously and he himself emulates their worthy example by observing them in like manner. Thereafter the Buddha enumerates the benefits and advantages accruing to one who observes them—(vide details Observance of Poya (Upasatha) as preached by the Buddha—pages 8 to 16).

There is the Buddhist conception that the Four Guardian Gods of the Universe take a reckoning of the good and evil by human beings on the Upasatha Day. These guardian Deities are known in Pali as the *Cattaro Mahārājāno* and abide in the lowest of the heavens, namely the *Cātummahārājika Devaloka*. They bear individual names as Regents of the four quarters, viz. *Dhatarātha* of the East; *Viruhaka* of the South; *Virupākkha* of the West; and *Vessavana* of the North, as evinced from the *Ātānātiya Sutta* the—Four Guardian Gods besides exercising a vigilance over the universe have undertaken to protect all the followers of the Buddha. On the eighth day of the lunar half-month, these Guardian Gods despatch their counsellors into the human world to ascertain if men foster righteousness and virtue. They despatch their sons on the fourteenth day for the same purpose. And on the fifteenth day the Four Great Kings themselves appear in the human world. Having made their observations, the Guardian Deities submit their report to the gods of Tāvātimsa, at the general assembly of the Devas, who rejoice or lament according as to whether men prosper in righteousness or not. When the gods rejoice manifold blessings come to this human world; and when they lament, it forebodes evil and disaster—(*Anguttara Nikāya I—142*).

## THE OBSERVANCE DAY (UPOSATHA)

### The Observances (*Uposatha*)

Thus have I heard: Once the Exalted One was staying near Sāvatti, in Anathapindika's Park at Jeta Grove. There the Exalted One addressed the monks, saying: "Monks".

"Lord", they replied, and the Exalted One spoke thus:

"Monks, the Observance day, when observed and kept with eight qualifications is very fruitful, of great advantage, very splendid, very thrilling.

Monks, how is it so observed and kept?

Herein, monks, an Āriyan disciple reflects thus: "All their lives *arahants* abandon taking life and abstain therefrom; they dwell meekly and kindly, compassionately and mercifully to all beings, laying aside stick and sword. I, too, now during this night and day, will abandon taking life and abstain therefrom. I will dwell meekly and kindly, compassionately and mercifully to all beings and lay aside both stick and sword. So, in this way, I shall follow the example of *arahants* and keep the Observance". With this first qualification is it kept.

"All their lives *arahants* abandon taking what is not given and abstain therefrom. They dwell taking what is given, expectant; not stealing, but holding themselves in purity. I, too, now, during this night and day, will act likewise. So, thereby, I shall follow the example of *arahants* and keep the Observance". With this second qualification is it kept.

"All their lives *arahants* abstain from living the ungodly life; living the godly life, abiding part, they abstain from intercourse, the village-practice. I, too, now.....will act likewise. So, thereby, I shall follow the example of *arahants* and keep the Observance". With this third qualification is it kept.

“All their lives *arahants* abandon lying and abstain therefrom; speaking the truth, bondsmen to truth, trustworthy, dependable, they deceive no one in the world. I, too, now.....will act likewise.....and keep the Observance”. With this fourth qualification is it kept.

“All their lives *arahants* abandon spirituous liquors that cause sloth, and abstain therefrom. I, too, now.....will act likewise.....and keep the Observance”. With this fifth qualification is it kept.

“All their lives *arahants* have but one meal (a day), abstaining from food at night and at wrong times. I, too, now.....will act likewise.....and keep the Observance”. With this sixth qualification is it kept.

“All their lives *arahants* abstain from looking on at shows and fairs, where there is dancing, singing and music; from wearing, decorating or adorning themselves with garlands, scents and cosmetics I, too, now.....will act likewise.....and keep the Observance”. With this seventh qualification is it kept.

“All their lives *arahants* abandon using large and lofty beds and abstain therefrom; they lie on low beds, couches or strewn grass. I, too, this night and day, abstaining from using a large or lofty bed, will lie on a low one or on a couch or on strewn grass. So, in this way, I shall follow the example of *arahants* and keep the Observance”. With this eighth qualification is it kept.

Monks, the Observance day, when observed and kept with these eight qualifications is very fruitful, of great advantage, very splendid, very thrilling”.

### BENEFITS

“How fruitful, how advantageous, how splendid and how thrilling is the Observance day (when kept)?

Monks, though one hold power, dominion, sway over these sixteen great peoples, rich with the seven gems, that is to say: *The Angas, Magadhas, Kāsis, Kosalas, Vajjis, Mallas, Cētis, Vansas, Pañcālas, Macchas, Sūrasenas, Assaks, Avantīs, Gandhāras* and the *Kāmbojas*,

yet such power is not worth a sixteenth part of the Observance day kept with the eight qualifications. And why is that? Mean, monks, is the rule of man compared with celestial happiness.

Monks, each fifty years of mankind is but a single night and day to the hosts of the Four Royal *devas*; their month has thirty of those nights, their year twelve months. The life-span of those *devas* consists of five hundred celestial years, each equal to that year. This is certain, monks, that when woman or man keeps the Observance day with the eight qualifications, they may arise, when the body breaks up after death, among the retinue of the Four Royal *devas*. So, monks, this is said by me concerning that: Mean is the rule of man compared with celestial happiness.

Monks, each hundred years of mankind is but a single night and day to the *devas* of the Thirty; their month has thirty of those nights, their year twelve months. The life-span of those *devas* consists of a thousand celestial years, each equal to that year. This is certain, monks, that when woman or man keeps the Observance day with the eight qualifications, they may arise.....after death among the deva-retinue of the Thirty. So, monks,.....Mean is the rule of man compared with celestial happiness.

Monks, each two hundred years of mankind is but a single night and day to the *Yāma devas*.....Their life-span is two thousand celestial years.....

Monks, each four hundred years of mankind is but a single night and day to the Tusita *devas*.....Their life-span is four thousand celestial years.....

Monks, each eight hundred years of mankind is but a single night and day to the *devas* who delight in creating..... Their life-span is eight thousand celestial years.....

Monks, each sixteen hundred years of mankind is but a single night and day to the *devas* who have power over others' creations, their month has thirty of those nights, their year twelve months. The life-span of those *devas* consists of sixteen thousand celestial years, each equal to that year. This is certain, monks, that when woman or man

keeps the Observance day with the eight qualifications, they may arise, on the breaking up of the body after death, among the retinue of the *devas* who have power over others' creations. So, monks, this is said by me concerning that: Mean is the rule of man compared with celestial happiness.

Kill not, nor take what is not given thee,  
Speak ne'er a lie, nor drink strong drink, eschew  
Ungodly living, sinful intercourse,  
At night eat not, nor at unfitting times,  
Refrain from garlands and the use of scents  
And make thy bed upon the grass-strewn ground—  
Indeed this eightfold is th' Observance called,  
Taught by th' Awake, who to ill's end has gone.  
In ordered course the moon and sun sweep on  
Both fair to see and luminous. While through  
The sky they move, they gild the clouds and gloom  
Dispel; o'er every realm they shed their rays—  
Within this earth are treasures found: gems, pearls,  
The beryl, luck-stone, singi gold, and golds  
Called *jāta*, *kāncana* and *hataka*—  
But not a sixteenth part the worth are they  
Of the Observance kept—like sheen of moon  
To all the starry host 'tis in compare.  
Wherefore the virtuous woman, moral man,  
Who keep th' Observance day in these eight ways,  
Make merit yielding happiness and come,  
Blameless, unto the blissful heaven-world".—  
—(*Anguttara Nikaya IV* 248-255)



## OBSERVANCE OF POYA (UPOSATHA) AS PREACHED BY THE BUDDHA

### Sorts of Sabbath (Uposatha)

Thus have I heard: On a certain occasion the Exalted One was staying near Sāvattī, in East Park, in the terraced house of Migāra's mother. Now Visākhā, Migāra's mother, on the sabbath day came to visit the Exalted One. On coming to him she saluted him and sat down at one side. As she thus sat the Exalted One said this to Visākhā, Migāra's mother:

"Well, Visākhā! How is it that you come at noon"?

"Lord, today I am keeping the sabbath".

"Well, there are these three sabbaths, Visākhā. What are the three?

There is the herdsman's sabbath, that of the naked ascetics, and that of the Āriyans.

Now what, Visākhā, is the herdsman's sabbath?

Suppose, Visākhā, the herdsman at eventide restores the kine to their owners. Then he thus reflects: Today the kine grazed at such and such a spot, and drank at such and such a spot. Tomorrow they will graze and drink at such and such a spot. In the same way some sabbath-keeper here thus reflects: Tomorrow I shall eat such and such food, both hard and soft. And He spends the day engrossed in that covetous desire. Such, Visākhā, is the herdsman's sabbath. This sabbath of the herdsman thus spent is not of great fruit or profit. It is not very brilliant. It is not of great radiance.

And what, Visākhā, is the naked ascetic's sabbath?

There is a sect of naked ascetics, so called, a sort of recluses, who exhort a disciple thus: "Now, my good fellow,



lay aside the stick as regards all creatures that exist eastwards beyond a hundred joyanas: likewise westward, northwards and to the south". Thus they exhort them to kindness and compassion towards some creatures only, but not to others.

Then again on the sabbath they exhort a disciple thus; "Now, good fellow! off with all your clothes and say: "I have no part in anything anywhere, and herein for me there is no attachment to anything". Yet for all that his parents know him for their son and he knows them for his parents His children and wife know him for father and husband, and he knows them for children and wife. Yet for all that his slaves and workmen know him for their master and he in turn knows them for his slaves and workmen. Thus at a time when one and all should be exhorted (to keep the sabbath), it is in falsehood that they exhort them. This I declare is as good as telling lies. Then, as soon as that night has passed he resumes the use of his belongings, which had not been given back to him really. This I declare is as good as stealing. Such, Visākhā, is the sabbath of the naked ascetics. A sabbath of the naked ascetics thus spent is not of great fruit or profit. It is not very brilliant. It is not of great radiance.

### ARIYAN SABBATH

And what, Visākhā, is the Āriyan sabbath?

It is the purification of a soiled mind by a proper process. And how is it done, Visākhā?

In this matter the Āriyan disciple calls to mind the *Tathāgata*, thus; He it is, the Exalted One, the *Arahant*, who is a Fully Enlightened One, perfect in knowledge and practice, a Wellfarer, World-Knower, unsurpassed charioteer of beings to be tamed, Teacher of Devās and mankind, a Buddha is the Exalted One. As he thus be-thinks him of the *Tathāgata*, his mind is calmed, delight arises, the soilure of the mind is abandoned. It is just like cleansing the head when it is dirty, Visākhā.

And how, Visākhā, is the cleansing of the soiled head done by a proper process? By means of cosmetic paste and clay, by means of water and the appropriate effort of the person (using them). That is how the cleansing of the soiled head is done by a proper process.

And how is the cleansing of the soiled mind done by a proper process?

Herein, Visākhā, the Āriyan disciple bethinks him of the Tathāgata, thus: He it is, that Exalted One.....As he calls to mind the Tathāgata, his mind is calmed: the soilure of the mind is abandoned. This Āriyan disciple, Visākhā, is said to keep the *Brahma*-Sabbath. He dwells with *Brahma*. It is owing to *Brahma* that his mind is calmed, that delight arises, that the soilure of his mind is abandoned. That is how the cleansing of the soiled mind is done by a proper process.

Again, Visākhā, the cleansing of the soiled mind is done by a proper process. How is it done?

### CONTEMPLATION ON THE DHAMMA

Herein the Āriyan disciple calls to mind *Dhamma*, thus: Well proclaimed by the Exalted One is *Dhamma*. It is a real thing not a matter of time. It invites one to come and see it. It leads one onwards. It is to be understood by the intelligent for themselves. As he thus bethinks him of *Dhamma* his mind is calmed .....the soilure of his mind is abandoned, just like cleansing the body when it is dirty.

And how, Visākhā, is the cleansing of the dirty body done by proper process?

It is by means of shell, toilet powder, water and the appropriate effort of a person. That is how it is done. In like manner the cleansing of the soiled mind is done and how?

Herein, Visākhā, the Āriyan disciple calls to mind *Dhamma*, thus: Well proclaimed by the Exalted One is *Dhamma*.....As he bethinks him of *Dhamma* his mind is calmed.....the soilure of the mind is abandoned. This

Āriyan disciple, Visākhā, is said to keep the sabbath of *Dhamma*. He dwells with *Dhamma*. It is owing to *Dhamma* that his mind is calmed, that delight arises, that the soilure of the mind is abandoned. That is how the cleansing of the mind is done.....

Again, Visākhā, the cleansing of the soiled mind is done by a proper process. How is it done?

### CONTEMPLATION ON THE SANGHA

Herein the Āriyan disciple calls to mind the Order, thus: Well conducted is the Exalted One's Order of disciples, who walk uprightly.....walk in the right way.....walk dutifully.....to wit, the four pairs of human beings, the eight sorts of human beings: that Order of disciples of the Exalted One is worthy of respect, offerings and gifts, worthy of being saluted with clasped hands, a field of merit unsurpassed for the world.

As he calls to mind the Order, his mind is calmed, delight arises, the soilure of the mind is abandoned, just like the cleansing of a filthy garment by a proper process. And how is a filthy garment so cleaned?

By means of salt-earth, lye, cowdung and water, and the appropriate effort of a person. That is how it is done, and in like manner is the cleansing of the soiled mind done by a proper process. What is that process?

Herein, Visākhā, the Āriyan disciple calls to mind the Order.....As he thus reflects his mind is calmed.....This Āriyan disciple is said to keep the sabbath of the Order. He dwells with the Order. It is owing to the Order that his mind is calmed, that delight arises, that the soilure of his mind is abandoned. That is how it is done.....

Again, Visākhā, the cleansing of the soiled mind is done by a proper process. How is it done?

### CONTEMPLATION ON ONE'S VIRTUES (SĪLA)

Herein the Āriyan disciple calls to mind his own virtues, virtues that are unbroken and whole, unspotted, untarnished, giving liberty, praised by the intelligent, virtues

untainted by (craving or delusion) which lead to concentration of mind. As he bethinks him of his own virtues....., the soilure of mind is abandoned, just like the cleansing of a mirror by a proper process. And what is that process, Visākhā?

By means of oil, ashes and a brush of hair, and the appropriate effort of a person. That is how it is done; and in like manner is done the cleansing of the soiled mind..... What is that proper process?

Herein, Visākhā, the Āriyan disciple calls to mind his own virtues.....This Āriyan disciple is said to keep the sabbath of the virtues. He dwells with virtue, and it is owing to virtue that his mind is calmed.....That is how it is done.

Again, Visākhā, the cleansing of the soiled mind is done by proper process. How is it done?

Herein the Āriyan disciple calls to mind the *Devās*, thus there are the *Devās* of the Four Great Kings, the *Devās* of the Thirty-Three, the *Devās* of *Yāma's* realm, the Happy *Devās*, those that delight in creation, those that control the creations of others, those of *Brahma's* company, and those who are still beyond that. Such faith exists in me as the faith blessed with which those devatā deceased from this world and were reborn in that world. Such virtue as theirs exists in me, such religious knowledge as theirs exists in me. Such is my liberality and my insight. As he thus calls to mind the faith, virtue, religious knowledge, liberality and insight of himself and of those devatā, his mind is calmed: delight arises in him: the soilure of his mind is abandoned just as, Visākhā, in the refining of sterling gold that is impure by a proper process. What is that process?

By means of a furnace, salt-earth, and chalk, a blow-pipe, tongs, and the appropriate effort of a person. That is how the refining of sterling gold that is impure is done by a proper process. Just so, Visākhā, the purification of a soiled mind is done by a proper process. What is that process?

Herein, Visākhā, the Āriyan disciple calls to mind the *Devās*.....(as above). As he thus calls to mind the faith, virtue, religious knowledge, liberality and insight of himself and of those devatā, his mind is calmed: delight arises in him: the soilure of his mind is abandoned. This Āriyan disciple is said to keep the Deva-sabbath: he dwells with the *Devās*: it is owing to the Devās that his mind is calmed, that delight arises, that the soilure of his mind is abandoned. That is how.

### THE EIGHT PRECEPTS

Then that Āriyan disciple thus ponders: As long as they live, the Arahants, by abandoning the slaying of creatures, are abstainers from the slaying of creatures, have laid aside the rod; they are modest, show kindness, they abide friendly and compassionate to all creatures, to all beings. So also do I abide this night and day.....abstaining from such actions.....showing kindness to all beings. By this observance I too imitate the Arahants and I shall have kept the sabbath.

As long as they live the *Arahants*, by abandoning the taking of things not given, abstain from stealing: they take only what is given, they wait for a gift, they abide in purity free from theft. So also do I myself abide.....By this observance I too imitate the Arahants and I shall have kept the sabbath.

As long as they live the *Arahants*, by abandoning impurity of life, dwell observing chastity, abstaining from unchastity, from sexual intercourse, dealings with women. So also do I abide this night and day.....By this observance.....I shall have kept the sabbath.

As long as they live the *Arahants*, by abandoning falsehood, dwell abstaining from falsehood, speaking the truth, joiners of truth to truth, unswerving, reliable, no deceivers of the world. So also do I myself abide this night and day.... By this observance.....I shall have kept the sabbath.

As long as they live the *Arahants*, by abandoning indulgence in liquor fermented and distilled which gives occasion to sloth, are abstainers therefrom. So doing, I also abide



this night and day. By this observance.....I shall have kept the sabbath.

So long as they live the *Arahants* live on one meal a day, abstaining from food at night, refraining from food at unseasonable hours. So also do I myself this night and day.

By this observance.....I shall have kept the sabbath.

As long as they live the *Arahants* refrain from going to the exhibitions of nautch-dancing and singing. I also by so doing .....shall have kept the sabbath.

As long as they live the *Arahants*, by abandoning the use of high, wide couches, abstain therefrom; they make their bed lowly, on a pallet or on a spread of rushes. I also this night and day do likewise. By this observance I imitate the *Arahants*.....and I shall have kept the sabbath.

#### BENEFITS OF OBSERVING THE PRECEPTS

Such, Visākhā, is the Āriyan sabbath. A sabbath thus observed is of great fruit, of great profit. It is brilliant. It is of great radiance. How so?

Just as if, Visākhā, one should exercise lordship, rule and sovereignty over these sixteen great provinces, replete with the seven gems to wit: The *Angas*, *Magadhas*, *Kasis*, *Kōsalans*, *Vajjians*, *Mallas*, *Cetis*, *Vansas*, *Kurus*, *Pancālas*, *Macchās*, *Surasenas*, *Assakas*, *Avanti*, *Gandhāra* and *Kambojā* yet would such sovereignty not be worth one-sixteenth part of a sabbath observed in all its eightfold parts. What is the cause of that? A poor thing. Visākhā, is human sovereignty to set beside heavenly bliss.

#### LIFE-SPAN OF THE DEITIES (DEVĀS)

Now, Visākhā, fifty years of human life are a single night and day to the *Devās* of the Four Great Kings. Thirty such days and nights make a month. Twelve of such months make a year. Five hundred of such years make up the life-period of the *Devās* of the Four Great Kings.

But there is the possibility, Visākhā, that some woman or man, by observing the sabbath in all its eight parts, when body breaks up after death may be reborn in the company of the *Devās* of the Four Great Kings. It was in this connexion that I said "A poor thing is human sovereignty to set beside heavenly bliss".

Again, Visākhā a hundred years of human life are but a single night and day to the *Devās* of the Thirty-Three. Thirty such nights and days make a month. Twelve of such months make a year. A thousand such heavenly years make the life-period of the *Devās* of the Thirty-Three.

But there is the possibility, Visākhā, that some woman or man..... may be reborn in the company of the *Devās* of the Thirty-Three. It was in this connexion that I said.....

Two hundred years of human life are but a single night and day to the *Yāma Devas*. Thirty such days.....Two thousand such heavenly years make up the life-period of the *Yāma Devās*.

But there is the possibility, Visākhā, that some woman or man.....may be reborn in the company of the *Yāma Devās*. It was in this connexion.....

Four hundred years of human life make one night and day of the Happy *Devās*.....Four thousand such years make up the life-period of the Happy *Devās*.

But there is a possibility, Visākhā, that some woman or man may be reborn.....It was in this connexion that I said.....

Eight hundred years of human life make one night and day of the *Devās* that delight in creation.....eight thousand such heavenly years make up the life-period of these *Devās*.

But there is the possibility, Visākhā, that some woman or man may be reborn.....It was in this connexion that I said.....

Sixteen hundred years of human life make one night and day of the *Devās* that delight in others' creations.... Sixteen thousand such years make up the life-period of these *Devās*.



But there is the possibility, Visākhā, that some woman or man, by observing the sabbath in all its eight parts, when body breaks up after death may be reborn in the company of these *Devās*. It was in this connexion that I said; "A poor thing is human sovereignty to set beside heavenly bliss".

Let him not kill, nor take what is not given,  
Nor utter lies, nor of strong drink partake:  
But from unchastity let him abstain,  
Nor eat at night, nor at unfitting times,  
Nor wear a garland, nor use scents, but stay  
On a mat spread on the ground. This is the Sabbath  
Great, eightfold, of a kind to make an end  
Of Ill, by the Enlightened One proclaimed.  
The moon and sun, the sight of which is sweet  
Move to and fro, shed radiance where they move  
Scatter the gloom and gliding thro' the sky,  
Make the clouds lustrous, lighting every quarter.  
Within this space all manner of wealth is found,—  
Pearl, crystal, beryl, luck-stone, nugget-gold,  
And lustrous gold and that called hātaka.  
Yet are they all not worth one-sixteenth part  
Of a sabbath with its precepts eight complete;  
Nor is the bright moon with its host of stars.

Therefore the woman and the man devout  
Who keep this sabbath with its precepts eight,  
Performing merit fruitful of results,  
In the heaven-world are born without reproach".

—(*Anguttara Nikāya* I. 204-215)

## VESAK POYA

The Vesak Full Moon which falls in the month of May commemorates the following important events in the dispensation of the Buddha:—

- (1) The Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment and Parinibbāna.
- (2) The ascetic Sumēdha receives the assurance from Dīpankara Buddha that he will become a Buddha known as Gōtama.
- (3) The Twin Wonder (*Yamaka-pātihāriya Nāna*) was performed by the Buddha to overcome the pride of His relatives at Kapilavatthu and to convince them of the might and majesty of His teachings.
- (4) In the eighth year of His Enlightenment the Buddha visited Kelaniya, a town in Ceylon, and also made the imprint of His sacred foot on the crest of Sri Pāda.
- (5) The Buddha visited Ceylon for the third and last time and consecrated sixteen sacred shrines.
- (6) King Devānampiyatissa of Ceylon performed a second consecration when he received the five ensigns of royalty from Emperor Asoka of India.
- (7) The Buddha knowing that His Dhamma would be preserved in its pristine purity for a very long time in Ceylon, told Sakka, the chief of *Tāvātinsa* to protect the *Buddha Sāsana* and the Sinhala race.
- (8) According to the Mahavansa Prince Vijaya and the ancestors of the Sinhala race landed on Sri Lanka's soil in 544 B.C.
- (9) The work in connection with the construction of Ruvanveli Dāgaba in Anurādhapura, Ceylon, was inaugurated.

To Buddhists all over the world the full-moon day of *Vesak* which falls in the month of May, is an event of the utmost importance and significance as it commemorates the Birth, Enlightenment and *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha.

To those who do not follow the Buddhist faith, the Birth and Enlightenment of the Buddha is also of the greatest significance when one considers the unique contribution made by the Buddha over 2,500 years ago to the various branches of modern knowledge. Moreover, one marvels, whether he be a Buddhist or non-Buddhist, at the rational and scientific teachings of Buddhism, which indeed is in keeping with the scientific temper of this modern age. It is no wonder then that the brilliant minds and thinkers of the East and West have bowed their heads in reverence and acknowledged Gōtama the Buddha as the greatest man ever born, beyond compare, the greatest combination of heart and mind that ever existed.

On this hallowed day, our hearts and minds are naturally directed to the Blessed One who through countless aeons strove earnestly and strenuously to gain supreme enlightenment and proclaim the *Dhamma* for the benefit of gods and men. His enlightenment at the Bodhi Tree at Buddhagayā on this memorable full-moon day is of tremendous importance. It is an epoch-making event in the annals of history because he discovered the remedy for the ills of life and solved the problems of life and death. Moved by deep compassion and boundless love for suffering humanity he proclaimed the *Dhamma* which is glorious in the beginning, glorious in the middle and glorious in the end, for forty-five years which is unprecedented and unsurpassed by any other religious teacher.

### BUDDHA'S ENLIGHTENMENT

The Buddha's Enlightenment is significant to us mortal beings because the Buddha as a man reached the acme of perfection and the pinnacle of wisdom through his own inherent powers without the aid of any supernatural agency or an Omniscient God. This stupendous achievement of the Buddha gives us ordinary men, enmeshed as we are in the storms and tempests of life, much encouragement and inspiration in that, we ourselves could, if we made the necessary effort, attain that glorious state of Buddhahood. Among the world's religious teachers the Buddha alone has the glory of having rightly judged the intrinsic greatness of

Man's capacity to work out his own salvation without any extraneous aid. If the worth of a truly great man consists in his raising the worth of all mankind, who is better entitled to be called truly great, than the Blessed One, who instead of degrading man by placing another being over him, has exalted him to the highest pinnacle of wisdom and love. Therefore the teachings of the Buddha holds out hope for the modern man, who is sunk in the mire and morass of drab materialism, by offering a path which leads to spiritual illumination and ultimate deliverance from physical and mental bondage. The Buddha was inviting man to move out of the entanglements of mental and spiritual slavery into the rarefied spiritual atmosphere of peace and perfection, which has been reserved for a specially graced person by other religions. In doing so, he has paid the highest tribute and singular honour to man.

### UNIQUE MARKS

Though the Buddha was born as a human being, yet he was no ordinary human being, but an extraordinary being (*Acchariya Manussa*), who achieved that exalted position through his own individual striving and wisdom. Sages who were summoned to king Suddhodana's palace predicted a great future when the Buddha was a young prince leading a household life. They discovered thirty-two marks which indicated that he was a great man (*Mahā Purusa*) besides eighty minor marks. These thirty-two major marks and the eighty minor marks are elaborately enumerated in the *Lakkhana Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, and their symbolical meanings show how the future greatness of the being is already anticipated in the child.

The *Bōdhisatta*—the Buddha aspirant—was able to acquire these unique marks by the practice of certain ethical qualities known as *pāramī*, and this discourse shows how each distinct mark was acquired by the practice of a particular virtue. His recollection and mindfulness are indicated by a stiff neck which does not easily turn left and right to satisfy the spirit of curiosity. The open hands keep nothing hidden; his is not the closed fist of a teacher of esoteric doctrines. The fingers of equal length indicate the

absence of grasping, for unequal fingers form an uneasy grip, flat feet indicate the manner of walking, the footprint of a lustful person is divided in the middle; a person with a malicious character will walk jerkily with rubbing feet and digging toes. A person with a sluggish mind will walk with dragging feet. Thus the Buddha's freedom from the three roots of all evil is symbolised in the flat soles of his feet.

### WHO IS A BUDDHA

An interesting conversation that ensued between a certain Brahmin named Dōna and the Buddha, depicts in unequivocal terms, the pre-eminent, and peerless position of a Buddha. The Brahmin Dōna questioned the Buddha as follows:—

“Your Reverence will be a Deva?”

“No indeed, brahmin, a Deva am I not”. replied the Buddha.

“Then Your Reverence will be a Gandhabba?”

“No, indeed, Brahmin, a Gandhabba am I not”.

“A Yakkha then?”

“No, indeed brahmin, not a Yakkha”.

“Then Your Reverence will be a human being?”

“No, indeed brahmin, a human being am I not”.

“Who, then, pray, will Your Reverence be?”

The Buddha replied that He had destroyed defilements which condition rebirth as a *Deva*, *Gandhabba*, *Yakkha* or a human being and added:

“As a lotus, fair and lovely,  
By the water is not soiled,  
By the world am I not soiled;  
Therefore, brahmin, I am Buddha,

(*Gradual sayings part II. pp. 44-45*).

The above conversation illustrates the fact that the Buddha was not a mere rationalist, philosopher or intellectual mystic as some scholars try to make out. The pity of it is that these scholars try to judge the Buddha through their



own intellectual standards. The Buddha has, on the other hand, in clear and unequivocal terms revealed his supreme attainment and spiritual stature in the first sermon he preached to the five ascetics thus:

“When O *Bhikkhus*, the absolute true knowledge regarding these Four Noble Truths, under their three aspects and twelve modes became perfectly clear to me, then only did I acknowledge in this world together with gods, *māras* and *brahmas*, amongst the host of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the incomparable supreme enlightenment”. (*Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*)

### OMNISCIENCE AND THREE-FOLD-KNOWLEDGE

However there are some scholars who assert that there is no evidence from the early texts (4 *Nikāyas*) regarding the Buddha's Omniscience. But a careful scrutiny of these texts provide convincing evidence of the Buddha's Omniscience. According to the early Buddhist Scriptures, the Buddha is known to have claimed Omniscience only in so far as he directed His mind in a particular direction. That is to say, the “Omniscience” of the Buddha meant that He was able to “know” a thing in all its entirety only when He directed His mind to the particular thing—whether it was in regard to the past, the present or the future. The Omniscience of the Buddha did not mean that He knew everything at one and the same time—which, incidentally, is an attribute claimed only by those who believe in an Omnipotent Deity as the Creator. However, some scholars who assert that the Buddha did not claim “Omniscience” (*Sabbāññū*), often cite the *Tevijja Vacagotta Sutta*, No 71 of *Majjhima Nikāya*, wherein the Buddha claimed the Threefold knowledge (*Tevijja* namely—

- (1) Recollection of numberless former existences (*Pubbenivāsānussati*).
- (2) Seeing beings passing away and being reborn according to their Kamma, Divine Eye (*Dibba-Cakkhu*).

- (3) Knowledge of the destruction of the Cankers (*Āsavakkhaya-Ñāna*) ignoring completely references to His Omniscience in other Suttas.

However, a careful study of the Pali Canon, clearly shows that there is considerable evidence to support the view that the Buddha was, indeed, Omniscient, and could have, if He so wished, have an unobstructed view into the distant future, and that His "Omniscience" was not restricted to the past and present as is believed by some scholars.

When one refers to the *Suttas* (discourses) in an endeavour to prove or disprove the "Omniscience" of the Buddha, one should first consider the type of audience that was addressed and, if possible their level of understanding and attainments. One should also consider whether the Buddha was addressing a particular individual *bhikkhu* or the *Order of Monks* (*Sangha*) as a whole, or again, a non-human being (*Deva, Yakkha*), a lay follower or the follower of another sect (*Jain*, naked ascetic, etc.). One must also consider whether the Buddha was discoursing on conventional truths or the Ultimate Truths.

One must also carefully note that a Sutta cannot be studied in isolation. There is an intricate net-work of cross references throughout the whole of the Pali Canon, so much so that when one reads a particular discourse one should also consider everything else that has been said on that particular subject in other discourses too.

An example would make the point clearer. We find, for instance, a reference to "Omniscience" in the *Kannakattihāla Sutta* (90th Discourse of the *Majjhima Nikāya*) and in the *Tevijja-Vaccagotta Sutta*, 71st Discourse of the *Majjhima Nikāya* too there is a reference to "Omniscience" and the "Threefold Knowledge". However, in the *Tevijja-Vaccagotta Sutta* the Buddha did not claim Omniscience in the sense that He had knowledge and vision of all things all the time as claimed by Niganta Nataputta. On the other hand, in the *Kannakattihāla Sutta*, it is stated that king Pasenadi had heard a report that the Buddha had declared it impossible for any ascetic or Brahmin to be Omniscient



(*Sabbaññū*) and he (*Pasēnadi*) asked the Buddha if He had made such a statement. The Buddha replied that what He had said was that it was impossible for anyone to know and see everything at one and the same time, but that He did not deny that a recluse or Brahmin could, if he so wished, be Omniscient, All-seeing, having an infinite knowledge and vision, subject of course, to the qualification that all things could not be seen or known at one and the same time. This *Sutta* proves beyond all doubt that He did claim Omniscience. It is also significant that the Buddha categorically claimed Higher Knowledges—these being apart from the “threefold knowledge”.

### TEN POWERS (*BALA*)

The *Mahāsīhanāda Sutta* No. 12 of the *Majjhima Nikāya* and *Anguttara Nikāya* X 21. refer to these as the Ten Powers (*Bala*) They are:

- (1) He knows what is possible as possible, and what is impossible as impossible.
- (2) He knows the ripening of *karmas*, past, present and future.
- (3) He knows whither all paths (of conduct) lead.
- (4) He knows the many and various elements or factors , of the world (existence).
- (5) He knows the various intentions of individuals.
- (6) He knows the faculties of other beings, whether quick or slow, etc.,
- (7) He knows the impurity, purity and growth of the trances, releases, concentrations and attainments.
- (8) He knows numberless former existences.
- (9) With his divine eye he sees beings passing away and being reborn according to their *karma*.
- (10) With the destruction of the *āsavas* he has of Himself attained and realized release of mind and knowledge in this life and abides in it.

The last three knowledges, viz. (8), (9) and (10) known as the "threefold knowledge" are the only "knowledges" possessed by the Arahats and the rest are the special knowledges of the Buddha.

In the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*, No. 26 of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha when questioned by Upaka a wandering ascetic as to who his teacher was, the Buddha Himself said in clear and unmistakable terms that He had no teacher and had attained by Himself to the exalted and pre-eminent position of an All-knowing Conqueror and All-knower (*Sabbavidū*); and that there was none to rival him in the worlds of gods and men; and was the Unrivalled Teacher, the Supreme Buddha.

"Victorious over all. Omniscient (*Sabbavidū*) am I  
Among all things undefiled,  
Leaving all, through death of craving free.  
By knowing for myself whom should I point to....."

It is also noteworthy that this was the first celebrated declaration that the Buddha made in regard to His attainment of Buddhahood and Omniscience. References to several translations such as those by Dr. E. J. Thomas, Miss I. B. Horner, President of the Pali Text Society, point to the accepted translation of *Sabbavidū* as "Omniscience". According to the late Venerable Agga Mahā Panditha Polwatta Buddhaddatta Thera's Pali English Dictionary published for the Pali Text Society too, the meaning of the term "*Sabbavidū*" is given as "All-knowing" and as a synonym for "*Sabbaññū*" which also means "All-knowing" or "Omniscience". The word *Sabbadassāvī* has also the same meaning.

### SABBAÑÑŪ

But some scholars contend that the word *Sabba-vidū* has been used in the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* and not *Sabbaññū*, thus implying that the identical meaning of "All-knowing" (*Sabbaññū*) was not implied. This is not a correct understanding of the Doctrine because such words as "*Sabbaññū*" and "*Sabbavidū*" are synonyms, each being used in a different context. In the

very first sermon (*Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*), the Buddha, when explaining the Third Noble Truth in relation to ultimate deliverance, uses the word "*Nirōdha*" and not "*Nibbāna*". "*Nirōdha*" here is merely a synonym for "*Sabbāññū*".

There are some discourses of the earlier texts where Omniscience of the Buddha is implied though the word *Sabbāññū* has not been directly used. One such passage from the *Anguttara Nikāya* bears ample testimony—"Monks, whatsoever in the whole world, with the world of *Māras*, *Brahmas*, together with the host of recluses and brahmins, of devas and mankind, is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, searched into, pondered over by the mind—all that is fully comprehended by a *Tathāgata*. That is why he is called "*Tathāgata*". (*Anguttara Nikāya* IV, III, 23).

These *suttas* which are acknowledged by scholars as belonging to the early strata of the Pāli Canon (viewed in their proper context) prove beyond all doubt the Omniscience of the Buddha. Thus the *Dhammapada* most eloquently states:

"The sun glows by day; the moon shines by night,  
In war-array glows the warrior,  
In meditation glows the Brahman,  
By day and night glows the Buddha in all His  
splendour".

### SOBRIETY

Of majestic presence, with excellent speech to affirm his claim, heart filled with flowing love, and temper fearless as a lion, the Blessed One in order to carry out his mission manifested the great quality of a Noble Sobriety. Great and good men have had messages to convey and have striven to impart them, but because of some eccentricity, peculiarity or whim in their personal manner they have earned for themselves more ridicule than respect. But in the person of the Buddha there was nothing to raise a laugh. A perfectly sane mind expressed itself in sober and

wholesome manners. Neither in his speech nor in his carriage did he portray any whim or idiosyncrasy. He was as natural as a mountain, a forest, or a lake. His vigorous sanity and sweet humaneness compelled the reverence of all who met him. "Gōtama bids all men welcome". He is at home with all. He is "congenial, not supercilious, accessible to all". From this you will see that the Buddha's personality is unique in the history of men. The radiance of this unique teacher goes through a world of suffering humanity like a beacon-light to guide and illuminate men's hearts and minds in the shifting sands of time. The personality of the Buddha has also a special charm and attraction to the unbiased and unprejudiced mind in that there is not a flaw, blemish or stain in his life. He was the perfect personification and embodiment of all what he preached. The great German scholar, Professor Max Muller says:

"The Buddha was the embodiment of all the virtues he preached. During his successful and eventful ministry of 45 years he translated all his words into action; and in no place did he give vent to any human frailty, or any base passion. The Buddha's moral code is the most perfect which the world has ever known".

#### FIVE VISIONS (*PANCHA-CAKKHU*)

The Buddha was endowed with five visions or "*Pancha-Cakkhu*". He could see with His eye of flesh or "*māmsa*"-*Cakkhu* for a league all round by day and by night; even if a single sesame seed were to be thrown to a heap of seeds, he could pick it out—so pure was His vision, so immaculate was His sight. With His Divine Eye (*Dibba-Cakkhu*) He could see beings in the process of dying and being re-born, and He knew their merits and demerits too. If He wished, He could see one world, two worlds, to three thousand World Systems and beyond—His range being limitless, boundless and infinite. He was also the Discoverer of the Path of *Nibbāna* which is known as the Eye of Wisdom (*Paññā-Cakkhu*). There is nothing unknown, unseen, unperceived, unrealised and untouched by His wisdom. Everything past, present and future comes within the range of His knowledge. With the *Buddha-Cakkhu* or the



Buddha Eye, He surveyed the world and saw beings with little impurity, of great impurity, of keen or dull faculties or conditions. He knows that certain individuals have a tendency towards passion, others to hatred, delusion, reasoning, faith and knowledge. And according to their temperaments he preaches to them; on impurity, love, contemplation, and so on. The last vision is *Samantha-Cakkhu* which is keen and penetrating, for it is said, even those who had wisdom like Sariputra, move in the plane of Buddha's knowledge like birds in space. His All-seeing eye is also called "Omniscience". And as a result there is nothing unseen by Him. Everything that is to be known about the Three Worlds of *Kāma*, *Rūpa* and *Arūpa*, comes within the purview and ambit of this knowledge. Five aspects of knowledge, which embraces all things conditioned and unconditioned also come within the compass of omniscience, namely, *Sankhāra* (that is, how all things come together and are conditioned); *Vikāra* (that is, how they disintegrate into the elements); *Lakkhana*—the intrinsic and inherent characteristic of things; *Nibbāna*—The ultimate and supramundane State; and *Paññatti*—the conventional truths. Therefore all things—mundane and supramundane come within the compass of His Omniscience.

### FULLY ENLIGHTENED

Some Buddhists say that the Buddha was not Fully-Enlightened and that the Blessed One could not have known some of the modern developments in various branches of Knowledge. Such an attitude is diametrically opposed to many utterances in which the Buddha makes out that He knows more than what He has taught his disciples. At one time, the Exalted One, was staying at Kosambi Forest. The Exalted One gathered a few leaves in His hand and said to His disciples "Which are more, these few leaves which I have gathered in my hand, or the other leaves yonder in the forest? The disciples replied that the few leaves which the Exalted One held in His hands are not many, but many more are the leaves in the Forest. Just so my disciples, is that much more, which I have learnt and not told you than that which I have told

you. And why, my disciples, have I not told you that, because my disciples it brings you no profit, it does not lead to the turning away from the world to the subjection of all desires, to the cessation of the transitory, to peace, to knowledge, to illumination, to *Nirvāna*, therefore have I not declared it to you. (*Samyutta Nikāya*).

All special knowledges and virtues of the Blessed One could be included in the two characteristic qualities—His supreme Omniscience (*Sabbanutā-Ñāna*), and Incomparable boundless Compassion (*Mahā-Karunā Samāpatti-Ñāna*). These two sterling qualities are indeed a rare and unique combination that stamps the Buddha as the peerless Teacher of gods and men, and He alone shines like a lonely star in a dark and gloomy world.

### SPECIAL KNOWLEDGES

The Buddha was also blessed with Six special knowledges which are discussed in the *Patisambhidā Magga*. These marvellous and wonderful powers of the Buddha are not possessed by the Great disciples, not even by the Chief disciples Sāriputta and Moggallāna. They are the unique attributes of the All-Enlightened Ones. It was mainly through these superhuman powers that enabled the Buddha to guide and direct countless number of beings on the Path to Deliverance. Therefore he was known as a peerless teacher of tameable men. The first extraordinary knowledge possessed by the Exalted One is *Āsaya-Anusaya-Ñāna*—Knowledge of latent potentialities. He fully comprehends and understands the powerful latent and dormant powers both good and bad within a person's mind, cultivated by him in the infinite past. He knows the degree to which the seven defilements (*Anusaya*) are present in the minds of individuals. If the Blessed One finds that sensuous desire (*Kāma-Anusaya*) is a conspicuous characteristic in a person's make-up, He would then preach a sermon on the Impurities of the body to counteract the evil tendency and thus awaken the light of wisdom lurking within his mind which has been obscured by the dark clouds of sense-desire. This was demonstrated in his preachings and exhortations to Prince Nanda who was infatuated and intoxi-



cated with the beauty and charm of his prospective sweetheart Janapada Kalyāni and Khemā who was so enamoured of her own beauty. The light of wisdom dawned on them when the veil of lust and passion were lifted from their minds.

If hatred or anger dominated the mind of a person, the Blessed One expounded an appropriate sermon which would strike a responsive chord in his heart. The sermon would be on the heart-emancipating power of benevolence which would liberate him from the fire of hatred. A sermon on the emptiness and egolessness of the human personality would be expounded to a person intoxicated with pride and vanity. If on the other hand certain salient virtues have been cultivated by individuals in the interminable past he would bring out those characteristic qualities before their conscious mind. And indeed there would rake up a train of events in the person's mind and eventually lead him to final emancipation. The conversion of a Brahmin called Pancagga is a classic example. The brahmin approached the Blessed One and questioned him as to what the attributes of a monk were. Various definitions could be given in describing a monk. The Exalted One gave him the most appropriate definition which captivated his imagination and revolutionised his thinking. The Buddha perceived that Pancagga had meditated on the true nature of human personality in the dispensation of Kassapa Buddha. Therefore he said that a monk is one who contemplates on Mind and Body. This concise description of a monk evinced a ray of wisdom in the mind of Pancagga and he realized the Four Noble Truths. The second special knowledge possessed by the Buddha is the knowledge of the faculties present in a person's mind (*Indriya-parōṇariyatti-Nāna*). The Blessed One is able to perceive the different levels of development of the virtues—*Saddhā*—Faith; *Sati*—Mindfulness; *Viriya*—Energy; *Samādhi*—Concentration, and *Paññā*—Wisdom. He fully knows how these moral qualities

are present in every individual and to what degree they have cultivated them and preaches the *Dhamma* accordingly. This is well illustrated in the stories of Venerable Sōna and Vakkali Theras.

### GREAT COMPASSION

The next special knowledge of the Buddha is *Mahā-Karunā Samāpatti-Ñāna*—Knowledge of Great Compassion. For two hours in the morning and two hours before noon he radiates boundless compassion to all beings which blazes forth like the rays of the glorious sun, and finds out to whom he could render spiritual service and directs the weary wayfarer on the proper road. With this special knowledge he has transformed the lives of numerous beings, gods, maras, men, animals, ghosts, demons and helped them to attain the blissful states of existence and the goal of final emancipation. Never in the history of any religious leader has such immeasurable and incomparable love shown to all beings, without any invidious distinction, whatsoever. This very fact shows that the Buddha stands unparalleled and unsurpassed as a religious teacher. The fourth special Knowledge is *Yamaka-Pāthihāriya-Ñāna*—The Knowledge of the Twin Wonder. This special and supernormal power was exercised by him on three occasions to convince unruly elements the might and majesty of his teachings. He rose up into the air and lit up the whole firmament, fire issuing from the upper part of the body and water from the lower part of his body. The onlookers witnessing the phenomenon sees the marvel happening simultaneously, though this extraordinary feat is performed in two different thought moments. His proud and arrogant father who refused to acknowledge him as a teacher at the start, was awe-struck and was constrained to pay his obeisance and reverence to a teacher who had brought so much solace and happiness to suffering humanity.

The Fifth Special Knowledge of the Buddha is *Sabbāñ-ñutā-Ñāna*—Omniscience. Omniscience is a quality that was claimed by various teachers, even in the Buddha's time, for example, by Mahā-Vīra, and there were also various attributes of Omniscience. But the Buddha defined

“Omniscience” as being the ability to focus one’s mind in any direction, or any particular aspect of life, and by so doing, know it in all its completeness. This faculty, as defined by the Buddha, was however, not possessed by Mahā-Vīra. Mahā-Vīra, for instance, defined “Omniscience” as that faculty which enables one to see, hear and know everything that is happening anywhere and everywhere at all times. But the Buddha said that such a faculty can never be possessed by any one, for such a one who knows, hears, sees, everything at every time and every moment, would be the most unhappy being, for he would be seeing all the hideous and repulsive sights that are present in this world, and a person who claims such a faculty would not be speaking the truth. The Buddha on the other hand did not have all his knowledge present in his mind at one and the same time but he could extend the net of his knowledge over the whole world, and thus bring any part of it within his consciousness. This knowledge is also known as *Samantha-Cakkhu*.

The last knowledge is *Anāvarana-Ñāna*—Unobstructed knowledge. He knows all the formed and unformed, in other words all mundane and supra-mundane things without a reminder, thus it is unobstructed knowledge. It has no obstruction therein.

## BE YE ISLANDS

Great and Eminent Thinkers and master-minds throughout the ages have acknowledged the Buddha as one of the most penetrative intellects that the world has ever known. H.G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, Einstein, Anatole France, and a host of others have showered encomiums on his penetrative wisdom and incomparable compassion. Throughout his long and eventful dispensation of 45 years, the Buddha maintained a calm composure and serenity of mind and even in his dying moments he displayed perfect equanimity and keenness of intellect which was not the least affected by his crumbling and disintegrating body. He kept on cheering, comforting and exhorting his followers and above all, inspiring them to nobler heights of spiritual perfection and illumination.

“Therefore, Ananda, be ye islands unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves, seek no external refuge, live with the *Dhamma* as your island, the *Dhamma* as your refuge. Betake to no external refuge. How, Ananda, does a monk live as an island unto himself seeking no external refuge, with the *Dhamma* as an island, with the *Dhamma* as a refuge, seeking no external refuge? Herein, Ananda, a monk lives strenuous, reflective, watchful, abandoning covetousness in this world, constantly developing mindfulness with respect to body, feelings, consciousness and *Dhamma*. Whosoever shall live either now or after my death as an island unto oneself as a refuge unto oneself..... those monks shall be foremost amongst those who are intent on discipline”. (*Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta*).

### FACTORS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

It is of paramount importance that the immutable truths preached by the Buddha throughout the period of 45 years were succinctly summarised as the 37 factors of enlightenment, namely:—

1. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness.
2. The Four Kinds of Right Endeavour.
3. The Four Means of Accomplishment.
4. The Five Faculties.
5. The Five Powers.
6. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment.
7. The True Noble Eightfold Path.

These Truths enunciated by the Buddha at his last moments are significant in that they stand unique and pre-eminent and are not found in any other religious and philosophical system. These Thirty-Seven factors of enlightenment show emphatically that one's spiritual attainment could only be gained by a systematic and sustained endeavour at self-purity, self-control, and self-culture which eventually lead to ultimate deliverance—*Nibbāna* and when practised and cultivated and propagated lead to the weal and welfare and the good and happiness of mankind and also the perpetuation of the Buddha Sāsana. The Buddha says :



“Therefore, O Monks, be he to whom these truths I have perceived I have made known to you, which when you have mastered it, behoves you to practice, meditate upon and spread in order that the pure religion may last long, and be perpetuated, in order that it may continue to be for the good and happiness of the great multitudes, out of pity for the world, to the good and the gain and the weal of gods and men”. (*Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta*).

### NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

The distinguishing features of Buddhism as enshrined in the Noble Eight-fold Path was also clearly brought out by the Buddha in His last moments as follows:

“In whatsoever doctrine and discipline, Subhadda, the Noble Eight-fold Path is not found, neither in it is there found a man of true saintliness of the first, or of the second, or of the third, or of the fourth degree. And in whatsoever doctrine and discipline, Subhadda, the Noble Eight-fold Path is found, in it is found the man of true saintliness of the first, and the second, and the third, and the fourth degree. Now, in this doctrine and discipline, Subhadda, is found the Noble Eight-fold Path, and in it too, are found the men of true saintliness of all the four degrees. Void are the systems of other teachers—void of true saints. And in this one, Subhadda, may the brethren live the life that is Right, so that the world be not bereft of *Arahants*”. (*Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta*)

Professor T. W. Rhys Davids, the founder of the Pali Text Society, refers to the Noble Eight-fold path thus—“Buddhist or no Buddhist, I have examined everyone of the great religious systems of the world, and in none of them have I found anything to surpass in beauty and comprehensiveness, the Noble Eightfold path of the Buddha. I am content to shape my life according to that Path”.

### BUDDHA'S GREATNESS—“MANY FIRSTS”

The Buddha's greatness can be seen in the “many firsts” in the history of the world he was responsible for. He was

the first in the history of thought to conceive the idea of the greatest good of the greatest number. This applied not only to the people of India but also to the entire mankind. He sent out his disciples with the famous exhortation "Go ye forth for the welfare and happiness of mankind (*Bahu Jana Hithāya, Bahujana Sukhāya*) out of compassion for the world, for the weal, welfare and happiness of gods and man". The Buddha was the first to organise an international and disciplined society of monks (*Sangha*) who were to be the friends, the philosophers and the guides to men rather than their spiritual directors or spiritual dictators or mediators. The Buddha always laid emphasis on the need of a good friend (*Kalyāna Mitta*) for a man's moral and spiritual upliftment and progress. The Buddha was again the first to grant equality of status for women with men and thus to emancipate women. He also was the first to admit women into a religious order.

The Buddha was the first to envisage the Open Society as against the Closed Society or the Tribal Society. He dispensed with the rites, rituals and ceremonies connected with such events in the Life, of a man, as birth, marriage and death. These were treated as natural events without any sacramental significance about them. He also dispensed with the tribalistic rituals of initiation, confirmation and as the Buddhist laity was concerned these tended to put the mind of man in fetters and to retard his moral and spiritual progress. The Buddha saw in them exclusiveness and intolerance and hatred towards members of other tribes. The Buddha was again the first to teach the unity of mankind "Nothing unique in man's body is found" He said "The difference in men is nominal" He also taught that racial feelings (*Jāti Vitakka*) and national feelings (*Jana Sāda Vitakka*) and self pride (*Avannathi*) tended to defile man's mind and to act as a hindrance against feelings of loving kindness, compassion and charity. They were also contrary to the Buddha's concept of the oneness of humanity. The Buddha not only taught the equality of man but also created an Order in which equality was actively practised. The Buddha said, "Just like the great



rivers Gangā, Yamunā, Achiravati and Mani on entering the great ocean lose their names and identities, so also the men of the five castes on entering my Sāsana lose their names and identities and became one community the community of the *Sangha*". Princes of Royal Blood, learned Brahmins, merchants and farmers as well as sweepers and scavengers who were treated as outcasts and untouchables were admitted to the Order by the Buddha and were treated equally.

### FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

The Buddha was also the first world teacher to preach Universal Love (*Mettā*) Compassion (*Karunā*) and Charity (*Cāga*) as against the narrow ideas of tribal love, tribal unity and tribal solidarity. The Buddha was the first World Teacher to formulate a Charter of Freedom of Thought. He told the Kālāmas:—

"O Kālāmas you have a right to doubt or feel uncertain for you have raised a doubt in a situation in which you ought to suspend your judgement. Come now, Kālāmas, do not accept anything on the grounds of revelation, tradition or report, because it is a product of mere reasoning or because it is true from a standpoint or because of a superficial assessment of facts or because of the prestige of your teacher.

"When you, Kālāmas, realise for yourself that these doctrines are evil and unjustified that they are condemned by the wise and that when they are accepted and lived by, they conduce to ill and sorrow then you should reject them".

"And when you know for yourself that certain things are wholesome and good then accept them and follow them". (*Kālāma Sutta*).

The Buddha was the first great philosopher of the World to discuss and propound the idea of universal change (*Anicca*). He in fact built his religio-philosophical system on that idea. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus is generally credited with being the first philosopher to discover the fact of Universal flux or change. But he lived nearly a

hundred years after the Buddha. The Buddha was also the first to teach mankind the immensity of time and space. As regards space he spoke in terms of myriads of world systems (*Saiha Sahassi Loka Dhātu*). In the *Anguttara Nikāya* the Buddha speaks of thousand fold minor World systems (*Culanika Loka Dhātu*); thousand fold middling world systems (*Majjhi-Mika Loka Dhātu*) and thousand fold Great Cosmos (*Mahā Loka Dhātu*).

As regards time, the Buddha spoke in terms of Aeons (*Kalpas*). Modern astronomy has proved the truth of what the Buddha said 2500 years ago and that without the aid of any of the modern inventions such as giant telescopes, radar television and telemetry.

### CASUAL LAWS

The Buddha was the first Great Thinker in World history to describe the events of the world in terms of casual laws. He reduced these events to five categories, namely, physical laws (*Utu Niyāma*); Biological Laws (*Bija Niyāma*); psychological laws (*Citta Niyāma*); Moral Laws (*Karma Niyāma*) and Spiritual Laws (*Dhamma Niyāma*). The Buddha was also the first Great Thinker in the world to point out that immorality, crime and other vices were mainly due to the maldistribution of wealth. The Buddha says "from goods not accruing to those devoid of goods, poverty becomes rampant, and when poverty becomes rampant stealing and other antisocial activities become rampant".—(*Cakkhaviatti Sihanāda Sutta*). The Buddha was again the first great philosopher to compare, contrast and criticise the religions and philosophies that were extant at the time, systematically, logically and objectively. These religions and philosophies ranged from Materialism to Idealism and from Athiesm to Pantheism. The Buddha's criticisms of these religions and philosophies are valid today as they were 2500 years ago.

The Buddha laid great stress on the understanding of the working of the human mind, its discipline and its cultivation; It is therefore natural that the Buddha should have made a detailed analysis of the mind. In that respect too, He was the first Great Thinker to formulate a system of

psychology which has the analysis of the mind as its basis. Above all the Buddha was the first to show the world the greatness of the human mind, to show that the human mind was not only capable of understanding the external or the objective world and the internal or the subjective world but also of realising the ultimate state of a Perfect Being (*Arahant*).

#### TRIBUTE BY GREAT MEN

The above unique and noteworthy discoveries of the Buddha has attracted the attention of the world. Schopenhauer had in his bedroom an image of the Buddha. Anatole France had said that when he set eyes on the Buddha "I felt there, if anywhere, is God walking on earth". General Ian Hamilton, bequeathing an image of the Buddha found by him in the ruins of a Mandalay temple, to Sir Winston Churchill said: "When you are worried just look at this reposeful attitude and smile at your worries. Mr. S. Radhakrishnan the eminent philosopher, and former President of India says—"We find in Gautama the Buddha, in powerful combination, spiritual profundity and moral strength of the highest order and a discreet intellectual reserve. He is one of those rare spirits who bring to men a realization of their own divinity and make the spiritual life seem adventurous and attractive, so that they may go forth into the world with a new joy at heart. While his great intellect and wisdom gave him comprehension of the highest truth, his warm heart let him to devote his life to save from sorrow, suffering humanity, thus confirming the great mystic tradition that true immortals occupy themselves with human affairs, even though they possess divine souls. The greatness of his personality, his prophetic zeal and burning love for suffering humanity made a deep impression on those with whom he lived, and gave rise to those legends and stories which are the modes of expression available to ordinary humanity when it tries to express true things. In this case the personal superiority of the Buddha to the rest of them; and so Gautama the apostle of self-control and wisdom and love becomes the Buddha, the perfectly enlightened, the Omniscient One, the saviour of the world. His true greatness stands out clearer and

brighter as the ages pass, and even the sceptical minded are turning to him with a more real appreciation, a deeper reverence and a truer worship. He is one of those few heroes of humanity who have made epochs in the history of our race, with a message for other times as well as their own".—(Lecture at the British Academy in 1938)

### LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Indeed he is the Light of the World. It is no wonder then that the Sacred texts speak in grand and bold words about the glorious personality of the Buddha thus:

"Brethren, so long as a *Tathāgata* arises not in the world, there is no shining forth of a great light of great radiance, but there prevails gross darkness, the darkness of ignorance and bewilderment.

But Brethren, as soon as a *Tathāgata* arises in the world, there is a shining forth of a great light of great radiance and no longer does gross darkness, the darkness of ignorance and bewilderment prevail.

Verily, brethren, the *Tathāgata* is the light of the world". (*Anguttara Nikāya*).

## POSON POYA

The Posen Poya, which falls in the month of June, marks the introduction of Buddhism to Ceylon by Arahāt Mahinda Thera. It is a day of unique significance in the annals of Ceylon history as this singular event had an imperishable and abiding influence on the lives of the people of Sri Lanka throughout twenty two centuries. The pristine message of the Buddha as enshrined in the texts of the Pāli Canon was introduced to the Isle by the princely apostle Mahinda, who in addition established the Buddha Sāsana in Lanka once and for all time. Ever since that memorable day the *Dhamma* has exercised a chastening and sobering influence on the life and thought of the peoples of Ceylon. Thus the coming of Buddhism to this island was undoubtedly the greatest single event in the history of Ceylon.

It was at the close of the Third Great Council which was held in Patna (India), consisting of one thousand *Arahāt* Theras and presided over by the scholar *Arahāt* Moggaliputta Tissa Thera and under the distinguished patronage of Emperor Asoka, that the famed *Dhammadūta* missions were inaugurated. Among these the most successful was the one to Lanka led by Arahāt Moggaliputta Tissa's own pupil the Arahāt Mahinda, son of Emperor Asoka. The Thera Mahinda was then only thirty two years of age and accompanying him were the *Arahāt* Theras Itthiya, Uttiya, Sambala and Bhaddasāla and the accomplished and gifted *Arahāt* Sāmanera Sumana, son of Asoka's only daughter Sanghamittā and her husband Aggibrahma, both of whom were ordained later and became *Arahats*. The lay-anāgami youth Bhanduka, a grand nephew of Vedisa Devi also accompanied *Arahāt* Mahinda Thera.

The achievements of Dhammāsōka were great as a just and wise ruler. But his greatest service to the world was in the work he did to ensure a long life to the Buddha's Dispensation through sponsoring the greatest and the most important of the Buddhist Councils, and the spreading of



the *Dhamma* in and outside India. But for the Third Buddhist Council held under the aegis of Dhammāsōka and the establishment of the Dispensation of the Enlightened One in foreign countries supported by him there would not have been today the living tradition of the true word and the pure discipline available to those who wish to learn and follow them, and what can truly lead men from the darkness of *Samsāra* to the light of *Nibbāna* would have by now disappeared from the world. It is relevant to discuss the circumstances which led to the ordination of Arahanta Mahinda and Sanghamittā and which eventually inspired them to undertake their noble mission.

Even in the Lifetime of the Lord Buddha there was no generous giver to the *Sāsana* like Asoka. In honour of each of the eighty-four thousand sections of the *Dhamma* he built a shrine. In the capital of Pāṭaliputta he built the Asōkārāma. The dearest wish of Asōka was to be an inheritor of the *Sāsana*, and one day the pious monarch enquired of the Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa, "Lord, is one like unto me a kinsman of the *Sāsana* of the Blessed One?" And the great Thera replied, "Even a lavish giver of gifts like unto thee is only a giver of requisites, not a kinsman of the *Sāsana*. But he who offers his son or daughter to the *Sāsana*, he who lets his children enter the Order of the *Sangha*, he alone is true kinsman of the *Sāsana*".

Now, since the pious emperor would fain become a kinsman and an inheritor of the *Sāsana* he asked his son Mahinda and his daughter Sanghamittā who stood near; "Do you wish to enter the Holy Order, dear children? Ordination is prized a great gain". On hearing their father's words, they said to him; "Father, this very day we would fain enter the Holy Order. For our ordination will be a blessing to thee and to us". So they renounced their royal state and entered the *Sangha*.

Some time before, Tissa the younger brother of Asoka and Aggibrahma, the nephew of Asoka and the husband of the Princess Sanghamittā, had received ordination. The little Prince Sumana, son of Sanghamittā also entered

the Order. Thus did Asoka dedicate himself, his children and his kingdom to the Sāsana of the All-Compassionate Master.

So on the full moon day of *Jettha* (that is the Posen or June full moon) in the year 308 B.C. that the great and noble personage *Arahat* Mahinda of wondrous powers accompanied by the aforementioned Theras rose up in the air departing from Vedissa Giri in Gwalior alighted on Silakūta, the Northern peak of Mihintale. *Jettha* is a month in the rainy season (May-June) which is commonly known here as Posen from the Sanskrit 'Pasavati', meaning to bear fruit, produce. The Pali term is 'Pasavati'. Posen therefore means an abundance of fruits and flowers. So it was when mother nature was in full bloom that the historic mission was undertaken by *Arahat* Mahinda.

#### THE KING MEETS ARAHAT MAHINDA

King Devanampiya Tissa, out hunting on the slopes of Mihintale saw the serene and majestic *Arahat* Mahinda and was amazed and trembled with fear at this unusual sight. Mahinda then addressed the King. "Tissa, Tissa, come hither". The king heard this and thought "this close-shaven person with a yellow robe and a torn and tattered cloth calls me by name. None born in this land is bold enough to call me Tissa. Who could he be? A human being or a Yakka?" The Thera Mahinda then answered "Great King, we are monks, disciples of the King of Truth. Just out of compassion for you have we from Jambudweepa arrived here". On hearing these reassuring words of the Thera, the king was freed from fear and he remembered the message of his friend, the great king of India, Dharmasoka, who had informed Devānampiya Tissa of his taking refuge in the Three Gems—The *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*, and had advised him to do likewise. Then being convinced that those who were before him were really monks, the king laid aside his bow and arrow and went up to the Thera, exchanged greetings with him and sat down at a side reverentially. After they had conversed a little, the Thera questioned the king to test his intelligence.

“Have you relatives, Oh King?” ‘I have many, Sir’. “And are there some also, who are not your relatives, Oh King?” ‘They are more numerous than my relatives’. “Is there anyone else besides your relatives and the others, Oh king?” ‘There is myself, Sir’. “Good. You have a shrewd wit, Oh ruler of men”.

When he had made his judgement of the king, the Thera preached the Lesser Discourse on the ‘Simile of the Elephant’s Footprint’. At the end of the sermon the king and his followers, Forty Thousand of them, took the three refuges—(*Mahāvansa*).

### THE PARABLE OF THE ELEPHANT’S FOOTPRINT

Is it not a singular coincidence that *Arahat* Mahinda thought it fit and proper to preach his first sermon, entitled “The Parable of the Elephant’s Footprint”—(*Majjhima Nikāya Discourse No. 27*) to the people of Lanka as the elephant is closely linked up with the life of Buddha and with the social and cultural life of Buddhism in Ceylon. Queen Mahā Māya dreamt that the Bodhisatta was descending from the Tusita heaven and entering her womb in the likeness of an ivory-white baby elephant. It was an elephant who looked after the Buddha and provided him with food and shelter when he sojourned to the sylvan solitudes of the Pārileyya Forest because of certain recalcitrant monks. Again it was in elephant, Nālāgiri, who charged furiously at the Buddha when he was on His morning rounds, only to fall prostrate at His holy feet. The figure of the Buddha stands out prominently among the architectural designs of Sri Lanka. The elephant-studded wall which girts the Ruvanveli Seya is a notable example. A Buddhist procession, worthy of its name, is not complete without an elephant or elephants. A classic example is the Māligawa Tusker walking majestically along the streets of Kandy leading the Esala Perahera bearing on its back Sacred Relics of the Buddha. It was this *Sutta* that heralded the introduction of Buddhism and laid the firm foundation of the Buddha Sāsana in Lanka. And

it was this Discourse that paved the way for our culture which is reflected in our ancient buildings, our tanks, our paintings and sculpture. And last but not least, our literature.

### ITS RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

Apart from the social and cultural significance of this *Sutta*, this discourse has a deep religious and philosophical significance. It gives a clear and vivid picture of the pre-eminent position of the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Sangha* in the dispensation of the Buddha, and sets out how one becomes a convert and eventually takes to the life of a *bhikkhu* through conviction realising that—"A den of strife is household life, and filled with toil and need, but free and high as the open sky is the life the homeless lead". This discourse characteristically describes in laudable terms the simple, contented and serene life of a monk who has given up all worldly entanglements and the allurements of the external world and thus enjoys the exalted and spiritual experiences that follow from such a life. He makes further progress on the path by cultivating certain noble and sublime qualities and develops his mind by temporarily eradicating the five main defilements of the mind which impede progress along the path to final emancipation. Having brought about an eradication of the five defilements, he is filled with an exhilarating sense of freedom. The Buddha compares in several other discourses the feelings of relief and happiness from the defilements to a person who has just discharged a debt, or recovered from a painful illness, or been freed from prison, or released from slavery or who has safely crossed a dangerous wilderness.

### THE ABSORPTIONS (JHĀNAS)

The suppression of the five hindrances, and the ensuing calmness and happiness of body and mind, makes it possible for the monk to attain what is called the first "Absorption". This is the first of a series of levels of consciousness which can be achieved by the successful practice of intense concentration of mind—a process which is often called, rather



vaguely, "Meditation". The attainment of these absorptions not only produce a blissfulness that is far beyond the range of worldly pleasures, it also makes the mind an instrument of knowledge that can transcend the limitations of the senses. After attaining the first absorption "*Jhāna*", the monk passes on to the second, third and fourth, shedding successfully thought conception, the exhilarating and blissful sensations that arise in him, and finally all feelings of happiness and unhappiness, pleasure and displeasure. He is now in a state of pure mindfulness and equanimity, and his mind—which has become "composed", "purified", "cleansed", "spotless", "undefiled", "pliant", "workable", "firm" and "imperturbable"—is capable of that direct and penetrating insight into the true nature of existence which brings ultimate deliverance. The Buddha compares such a state of mind thus—"It is as if there were a pool of water in the mountain, limpid, clear and still, and a person were to stand on the bank and see with his eyes the various shells, the gravel and pebbles, and the shoals of fish moving about or at rest so the monk with his mind composed, purified, cleansed, spotless, undefiled pliant, workable, firm and imperturbable directs his mind to the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers, or the defilements of the mind. He knows as it really is—'This is ill, this is the origin of ill, this is the cessation of ill and this is the way that leads to its cessation! Knowing and seeing thus his mind is freed from the canker of sense desires, the canker of becoming, that is the desire for continued existence and the canker of ignorance. Thus he attains the glorious consummation of the holy life—*Nibbāna*". (Dīgha Nikāya Discourse No. 2, Majjhima Nikāya 1, 279; Anguttara Nikāya 1.9.)

The principal and cardinal tenets of the Buddha are embodied in this discourse. The purpose of this discourse was mainly to convey to the king and his followers, the might and majesty of the teachings of the Buddha and also the ideal mode of life lived by the *Saṅgha* so that the king might learn how to treat his new guests. This sermon had



such a profound, far-reaching and powerful influence over the king and his retinue that at the end of the sermon the king and forty thousand embraced the new faith.

### SERMON ON KARMA AND REBIRTH

The next day Mahinda Thera preached a sermon based on the *Petavathu* and *Vimānavathu* to an audience consisting mainly of ladies of the king's palace. The subject selected was of an elementary nature which had a tremendous appeal to them. He related to them how beings are born in the celestial realms enjoying heavenly bliss owing to their good and meritorious deeds done in their previous lives. And on the other hand those who had led lives of moral depravity are born in woeful states of existence. In other words he was instilling into the minds of women-folk in a most effective and forceful manner the operation of moral causation which forms one of the fundamental and cardinal teachings of the Buddha. As they themselves believed in the existence of spirits of the dead the rational and scientific interpretation of the consequences of good and evil actions struck a responsive chord in their hearts. After having inspired and brought them to a certain level of spiritual awakening he preached to them on the deeper aspects of life with particular reference to the Four Noble Truths (*Saccasamyutta Sutta*) showing them the fearful and dreadful nature of *Sansāra* and the utter futility and hollowness of *Sansāric* existence. The light of wisdom gradually dawned on them, dispelling once and for all the dark clouds of ignorance and craving which had obscured their mental visions from time immemorial from seeing things in their proper perspective and they finally attained the first stage of sainthood.

A characteristic feature of the sermons that followed was that they were specially selected to suit the aptitude, temperament and spiritual development of the individual. The *Devadūta Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* was expounded to a vast concourse of people. This discourse sets out in detail in a very striking manner the beneficial and malefic effects of good and bad actions respectively. It depicts in particular the harrowing experiences and untold tortures

that await those who lead vicious and depraved lives. A vivid description of the hells are also given. This sermon was mainly designed at the audience to desist from following the path of moral depradation. It has also a special significance to present day society and gives an unequivocal answer to those Buddhists who are sceptical of the existence of hells and in a life after death.

A sermon based on the *Bālapandita Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* was preached by Mahinda at the Southern gate of the Nandana Park. An eager and attentive audience listened to this sermon which enumerates how through sheer ignorance and stupidity people commit evil by way of thought, word and deed and as a result suffer the dire consequences of such acts both in this life and in the lives to come. But the prudent and wise man refrains from such acts and does good deeds by word, thought and deed, knowing fully well that happiness and peace of mind will follow as a natural logical sequence. He therefore lives happily in this life and the next. This sermon brings out most forcibly one of the salient and outstanding features of the Buddha *Dhamma* that the results accruing to one are visible in this life itself, here and now. This discourse also most pignantly enunciates with striking similies the excruciating tortures of hell undergone by evil doers and the unalloyed happiness experienced in the heavenly worlds by those who follow the path of rectitude.

The main purpose of this sermon was to impress on the minds of the people that true happiness and contentment are inextricably associated with a good life. The highly ethical content of the Buddha's teachings outlined by Mahinda Thera opened up new vistas and spiritual horizons in their minds and inspired them to nobler heights of spiritual ecstasy and illumination. On hearing this sermon thousand devotees attained the first stage of sainthood. This was the second day after Mahinda's arrival that two thousand five hundred beings attained the glorious state of sainthood.

On the third day of his arrival, the great Thera Mahinda, preached *Anamataggiya Sutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya* which contains a series of sermons dealing with the immense suffering, torments and agony gone through by beings in the rounds of births and deaths in the incalculable past. Very apt and striking similies have been used to depict the dreadful nature of *Sansāra*. The fundamental doctrines of *Kamma* and rebirth, the immensity of *sansāra*, the doctrine of suffering and the origin of suffering and the urgent need to escape from the trials and tribulations, torments and tortures of *sansāra* are most poignantly illustrated in these *suttas*. The urgent need to escape from the bonds and shackles of existence is expressed in the following memorable words; "And thus O Monks, have you long undergone suffering, undergone torment, undergone misfortune, and filled the graveyards full; verily, long enough to be dissatisfied with all the forms of existence, long enough to turn away and free yourselves from them all".

#### MODE OF CONDUCT OF A MONK

On the fourth day he preached the *Aggikhandhōpama Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya* which emphasises in the most unequivocal terms the imperative duty of a monk to live an exemplary life in keeping with the *Vinaya* rules and warns that dire consequences would overcome him if he lives a life unworthy of a monk. It is significant to note that this sermon was preached after King Devānampiyatissa gifted the Mahameghavana Park to the *Sangha*. This discourse also has a particular bearing in the context of life of a bhikkhu in present day society. The admonition given by the Buddha to the monks and which was reiterated by *Arahat* Mahinda Thera on this memorable Poson Day should be strictly adhered to if the Buddha *Sāsana* is to flourish in all its glory and splendour in the years to come.

#### PROFOUND INFLUENCE

The tremendous impact and the profound influence that these sermons had on the people is evident from the fact that large numbers enthusiastically embraced a new religion and attained to the heights of spiritual glory and

moral perfection. The smouldering embers of spiritual divinity lying dormant and latent within their minds blazed forth into the luminous light of wisdom when the great Thera, Mahinda, expounded the *Dhamma* which is glorious in the beginning, glorious in the middle and glorious in the end.

### SALIENT FEATURES

What are the salient and cardinal features of Buddhism that had such profound and far-reaching effects in moulding and shaping the destinies of the people of this sacred Isle? Indeed, what is it that inspired those mighty beings of old to construct such magnificent and majestic structures like the Ruvanveliseya, Thūpārāma, Abayagiri, etc. which yet remain as silent reminders of the spiritual genius of our people? What indeed is it that inspired sculptors of old to give shape and form to the wonderful and radiant personality of the Buddha? And from that memorable day monumental *Dāgabas* and life-like Buddha statues sprang up throughout the length and breadth of this island.

The spirit of selfless service, kindness and tolerance, contentment and cheerfulness, sweet reasonableness and largehearted humanity, and devotion to learning and culture—these were the enlightened sentiments and exalted ideals embodied in the teachings of the Buddha that spurred them to such nobler heights. These sublime qualities sank deep into the very depths and consciousness of the people and formed part and parcel of their life.

### SYMBOLICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF A DĀGABA

To what extent the philosophical truths and ethical doctrines influenced the people could be gauged from the fact that these cardinal teachings were incorporated into the *dāgaba* at every stage of its construction. A *dāgaba* as a complete whole is made up of:

1. The base (*Padanama*).
2. The three circles or bracelets (*Pesavalalu*)
3. The dome (*Garbhaya*)
4. The four-sided enclosure (*Devatā Kotuwa*)



5. The tapering spirals (*Kot Kerella*)
6. The pinnacle or crown (*Kota*).

The symbolical representation of this makeup is as follows:

The base stands for confidence (*Saddhā*) based on a knowledge of the Good Law; the three circles or bracelets stand for the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Sangha* (*Tiratana*) or some say the Triple Worlds of Sentient Existence (*Kāma-Lōka*); form-world (*Rūpa-Lōka*) and formless world (*Arūpa-Lōka*); the dome stands for the Dispensation of the Buddha (*Buddha-Sāsana*); the foursided enclosure stands for the Four Noble Truths; the tapering spirals (eight in number) stand for the Noble Eight Fold Path; and the pinnacle or crown stands for *NIBBĀNA*, the glittering crown of the Buddha-*Dhamma*.

A *dāgaba* therefore is a living symbol of the All-Enlightened One and His *Dhamma*. It reminds us of the incomparable compassion and profound wisdom of the Buddha, and the matchless beauty of the *Dhamma*, which inspires Buddhists to heights of spiritual ecstasy and pious devotion.

The Buddha image is also a visible representation of the Buddha and it expresses eloquently the calmness, compassion, serenity and the smile of deliverance—and above all, the Message of Buddhism, as the Buddha is the personification and embodiment of all the Virtues He preached. The Russian philosopher, P. D. Ouspensky, bears ample testimony to this fact when he says of the Recumbent statue of the Buddha at Dehiwela, Ceylon, thus:—

“I do not know of any work in Christian art which stands on the same level as the Buddha with the Sapphire eyes, that is to say, I know of no work which expresses in itself so completely the idea of Christianity as the face of the Buddha expresses the idea of Buddhism. To understand this face is to understand Buddhism”.

### LOVING KINDNESS

One of the deepest and abiding influence that Buddhism has exercised on the lives and thoughts of the people is



Loving Kindness as expressed in the *Karaneya Metta Sutta*.

“Hatred never ceases by hatred; by love hate ceases, by well-doing ill. This is the eternal law. (Dhammapada Verse 5)

The spirit of Loving-Kindness which has permeated into the lives of the people is ably expounded in one of the texts as follows:—

“Even if robbers with a two-handed saw should cut off your limbs and joints, whoso gave way to anger would not be fulfilling my injunctions. No evil word should escape our lips; friendly and full of sympathy shall we remain with hearts full of love and that person shall we penetrate with loving thoughts, wide, deep, boundless, free from anger and hate. Thus, brothers, ought you to train yourselves”.

And it is no wonder that Paul Carus, the distinguished American Buddhist scholar has said that “the Sinhalese are famed as the gentlest race on earth and their religion is Buddhism” and indeed goodwill or compassion is the hallmark of a Buddhist.

### TOLERANCE

The grand spirit of Tolerance also inspired kings and the peoples of Ceylon. In the 6th century A.D. there was a Nestorian Christian Church at Anuradhapura, as Cosmas Indicopleustes tells us: “In that Island is established the Church of Christ of the Persians, and there is a presbyter sent from Persia and a deacon and the whole service of the church. But the natives and kings are of other faiths”. This was in keeping with the large-hearted Tolerance of the Buddha extended to followers of other faiths. This unique tolerance is amply demonstrated in several incidents in the Buddhist texts.

With the advent of Buddhism a wonderful spiritual and cultural awakening with all its ennobling and softening effects dawned upon the people of Sri Lanka. Thousands

of monasteries became the repositories of national culture and learning. The archaic form of the Sinhala language called *Elu* was inadequate to express the sublime teachings and profound philosophy of Buddhism, and consequently the language became enriched by freely borrowing words from Pāli and Sanskrit. Nearly ninety per cent of the words current in the Sinhalese language are borrowed or derived from the parent-languages, namely Pāli and Sanskrit.

### CULTURE AND LEARNING

The Buddhist texts of the Pāli Canon as well as their commentaries and Jataka stories exercised a tremendous influence on the morals and lives of the Sinhalese. The earliest works in Sinhala literature such as *Amāvatura*, *Butsarana*, *Dharmaṭṭhāṭṭhikāva*, etc., are profusely rich with vivid descriptions of Buddhist communities and the social life that prevailed around the Ganges valley in the time of the Buddha. The Buddhist Jātaka stories incorporating a wealth of information on the social patterns of early Buddhist communities provided fit themes for narrative poetry. Poems like the *Kaṇṭhikāva*, *Muḍāḍāva*, *Sasāḍāva* and *Kaṇṭhikāva* were composed, each having a fascinating Jataka story as the subject of its narrative. The *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa the great Indian poet of Sanskrit literature inspired our poets to evolve a new style of Sinhala poetry so magnificently presented in our Sandesa Kāvya. Through the ages Sinhala literature has been enriched by such epistolary compositions such as the Selalihini Sandesa, Girā Sandesa, Kōkila Sandesa, Hansa Sandesa and Mayura Sandesa.

And when we turn to the architectural remains of the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa we behold the glory that was India and the grandeur that was Lanka. The stupendous stūpas and viharas, now found in ruins bear testimony to the art and architecture which Lanka inherited from Buddhist India. The hand of the early Indian sculptor and builder is clearly visible in all our Archaeological monuments. In such magnificent works like the Lōvā Mahāpāsāda or Great Brazen Palace and the Ruvanveliseya or the Great Stūpa, in Anuradhapura

and Lankātilaka Vihāra and Lata Mandapaya in Polonnaruwa, the architectural grandeur of the ancient Sinhalese reached its meridian splendour. And what shall we say of the innumerable paintings and frescoes that adorn the vihāras all over the island. The art of painting was introduced into this country with the introduction of Buddhism. The classic beauty of the Sigiriya Frescoes bear a striking resemblance to those seen in the Ajanta Caves and this observation calls for further investigation and study by critics of Art.

And when we investigate into the arts and crafts of ancient Lankā as well as the folk-culture of the people, we notice the stupendous influence of Buddhist culture. The art of the Sinhala blacksmith and jeweller is an heritage coming to him from India through the ages. Sinhala jewellery, especially the Kandyan variety is Indian, both in workmanship and style. The Sinhala potter who turns out beautiful painted pottery inherited the craft from his forefathers schooled in the traditions of Indian pottery. And when we closely examine the social pattern and structure of the Sinhalese as well as the customs and rituals practised at birth, marriage and death we notice to what great extent Buddhist culture has gone to mould and civilise the lives of the Sinhala people through the centuries.

#### AN HISTORIAN'S VIEW

In commenting on the important part played by Buddhism in moulding the character of the Sinhala people let me quote in full the opinion of Paul Peiris, that eminent scholar, historian and writer—"The character of a people is largely the result of its religious beliefs, and this has been especially the case with the Sinhalese; but no bigotry, no intolerance has soiled their good name. They were prepared to see the good in everything, to realize that many roads might lead to the same destination. Buddhist kings supported Christian missionaries. Buddhist temples provided for the maintenance of Mohamedan rites among their tenants. It is the boast of the Sinhalese that force was never employed by them in those fields where reason alone should prevail; no Hypatia has stained their country

with her blood; no Smithfield has darkened their serene sky with its murky clouds. In every village rose its temple, small and retired, or majestic with its towering *dāgaba* and imposing gate. With that keen appreciation of the beauties of a transcendently beautiful nature, which finds its expression in the songs of every one of their great poets, Sinhalese utilised every commanding spot for the purpose of worship. Below lies the great tank which is their very source of life, a hundred acres of blue scenting the air with their rich and wholesome fragrance for a mile around. In the cool of the evening the waterfall splash lazily about, confident in the security which no one will disturb. The golden grain is bowing in the setting sun, ensuring to the villager peace of mind for another year to come. And as the great full moon rises in the heavens, etherealizing everything with its silver radiance, the villagers joyously troop forth, men and women and children clad in spotless white, each with the most perfect offering the mind can conceive, sweet-smelling flowers to renew their vows, not to steal, not to take life, not to drink strong drinks. No such centre can exist without shedding a hallowing and civilising influence, softening manners, elevating ideals, and purifying desires". (The Portuguese Era II, p. 108).

Thus to Buddhism the Sinhalese owe a deep debt of gratitude for their moral, intellectual, cultural and spiritual development. In fact the Sinhalese race grew up in the cradle of Buddhism. In the light of these developments Arahāt Maha Mahinda has been worthily given the appellation of 'The Second Buddha' (*Anu Buddha*) in reverential gratitude for his selfless service and dedication to the people of Sri Lankā. The Buddha Dhamma which was introduced to Ceylon by Arahāt Mahinda Thera is yet preserved in its pristine purity in Ceylon, and the whole Buddhist world looks up to this sacred isle for guidance and spiritual inspiration.



## ESALA POYA

The *Esala* full-moon which falls in the month of July is of great importance as it commemorates the following significant events in the life of the Buddha:

- (1) The preaching of the First Sermon, the *Dhammachakkappavattana Sutta*.
- (2) The Bōdhisatta Gōtama, was conceived in the womb of Mahāmāyā Devi.
- (3) Prince Siddhattha's Great Renunciation.
- (4) The First *Vas* (Retreat) was observed by the Buddha and the five Asetics at Isipatana.
- (5) The Birth of Prince Rāhula.
- (6) The performance of the Twin Wonder, *Yamaka Pātiḥāriya* by the Buddha to subdue the pride of the heretics.
- (7) The commencement of the preaching of the Abhidhamma to His mother and the *Devas* at the *Tāvātinsa* Heaven which took place in the seventh year of His Enlightenment.
- (8) The first convocation to rehearse the whole teachings of the Buddha (*Dhamma-Vinaya*) was held at Rājagaha presided over by the Arahāt Mahā Kassapa Thera and five hundred *Arahats* were associated with him. This took place under the distinguished patronage of king Ajātasattu, three months after the Buddha's *Parinibbāna*.
- (9) The Higher Ordination (*Upasampadā*) of Mahā Arittha and fifty five others took place two hundred and thirty six years after the Buddha's *Parinibbāna*.
- (10) The First *Vas* observance, consisting of sixty two *Arahats* was held in Ceylon at Ceṭiyagiri in Mihintale.



- (11) The foundation stones for the construction of Ruvanveli *Dāgaba* was laid by king Dutugemunu three hundred and eighty two years after the Buddha's *Parinibbāna*.
- (12) The enshrinement of the Relics of the Buddha and *Arahats* at Ruvanveli *Dāgaba*.
- (13) The commencement of the Daladā Perahera in honour of the Sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha which was brought to Ceylon from India by Princess Hemamāla and Prince Danta during the reign of King Kirthisirimewan.

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF TRUTH

The Esala full-moon marks the momentous and epoch-making event of the setting in motion of the Wheel of Righteousness or the establishment of the kingdom of Truth by the Buddha 2,555 years ago in the deer park at Isipatana, near Benāres. It was the occasion when the Buddha preached His first sermon to His erstwhile friends, the five ascetics, Kondañña, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma and Assaji, precisely two months after He attained Supreme Enlightenment under the shade of the Bōdhi Tree at Buddha Gayā.

This sermon, popularly known as the *Dhammachakka-pavattana Sutta*, comprising the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path struck a responsive chord in the hearts of these mature and intelligent ascetics who immediately became His disciples. Thus on this memorable day the Buddha *Sāsana* came into being and gradually the seed which germinated on the fertile soil at Isipatana grew into a mighty tree spreading its branches and foliage to the distant corners of the world.

Kondañña, the most enlightened of the disciples, was the first to gain the spotless and stainless eye of Truth (*Dhamma chakku*). Simultaneously, innumerable invisible beings

(*devās* and *brahmas*) who attained different stages of sanctity uttered paeans of joy. All the world-systems quaked and trembled and there appeared a brilliant effulgence all over the world, surpassing the splendour of the *devās*.

### IMPORTANCE OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The importance of the Four Noble Truths could be gauged by the fact that the Buddha Himself has made the revealing pronouncement thus: "It was through not understanding, not penetrating four things that I, disciples, as well as you have wandered so long through the long rounds of rebirth". (*Dīgha Nikāya*, No. 16).

We ordinary worldlings have thus gone through the slings and arrows of an outrageous fortune and the whips and scorns of time for incalculable aeons in the illimitable past by our ignorance of the Four Noble Truths. Thus by the gradual understanding of these immutable and incontrovertible facts of life we will be able to experience a greater measure of happiness in this age of storm and stress.

The Buddha's method of the exposition of these Four Immutable Truths could be compared to that of a physician par excellence. He is indeed known as an incomparable physician (*Bhisakko*) and peerless Surgeon (*Sallakatto Anuttarō*). He first diagnosed the dire disease which all beings are afflicted with and next He discovered its cause, then He found that it could be cured and lastly applied the infallible remedy.

Suffering (*Dukkha*) is life's dire disease. Craving (*Tanhā*) is the root cause of this disease (*Samudaya*). Its cure (*Nirōdha*) is the eradication of this unruly craving. The sure and certain medicine or remedy is the Noble Eightfold Path.

The four Noble Truths form the philosophical and ethical structure of the Buddha's teaching. The first three truths embody the philosophical tenets of the Master and the last truth, the Noble Eightfold Path forms the ethical foundation of the teachings. The above presentation of the Buddha Word refutes the popular misconception that it is essentially a philosophy which is the preserve of the

intellectuals and scholars. It is not only an ethical teaching but a moral philosophy with a strong practical bias, which when practised could indeed illumine the hearts of men and bring them joy and happiness. It is thus based not on divine revelation, not on dogma, not on mere hypothesis, but upon the verifiable facts of experience.

We are aware, if we exercise our faculty of thinking, that the Sorrow and Misery we experience are aggravated by our inordinate craving for the fleeting pleasures of this contemporary world. If we gradually diminish and lessen our desires we will lessen thereby our misery and experience a greater measure of happiness. If we entirely eradicate craving for the pleasures of the senses we would experience the highest happiness. The First Truth denotes suffering which is caused by craving, the Second Truth; if we completely eradicate craving we arrive at the Third Truth, the Cessation of Suffering—*Nibbāna*. How could we achieve this? It is by treading the Noble Eightfold Path—the Fourth Truth. The *Dhammapada* verse 336, says “Whoso in the world controls this stupid unruly craving, from him sorrows fall away, like drops of water from a lotus-leaf”.

The Triple Gem comprising the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*, form the object of veneration and adoration of Buddhists. The Buddha is the physician incomparable. The *Dhamma* is the sure and infallible remedy prescribed by the Master for the ills of life and the *Ariya Sangha* represents the perfectly healed Ones, those Noble Beings who have completely eradicated the defilements of the mind.

### FIRST NOBLE TRUTH

Let us briefly discuss the Four Noble Truths enunciated by the Buddha. There is this Noble Truth of Suffering. Birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering. Association with what is disliked is suffering, disassociation from what is loved is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering. In short, the five aggregates of experience as objects of clinging are suffering.

This Truth is of fundamental importance because it is only when one realises the utter futility and hollowness of Sansāric existence that one will yearn for the peace of *Nibbāna*, and earnestly strive for the attainment of it. The comprehension and understanding of this truth is stressed here and not a morbid sentimental disgust towards the world displayed by the disillusioned and frustrated but an objective and dispassionate understanding of it.

The first Truth of Suffering does not merely denote the pain, anguish and misery, both physical and mental, which are the common lot of mankind. It forms only part of the formula enumerated above, namely, birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, sickness is suffering and death is suffering. But on further examination of this formula it becomes clear to the intelligent mind that all the cherished objects of affection to which we cling with fond care and affection, are subject to the immutable law of change; that is to say, disassociation from what is loved is suffering, not to get what one desires is suffering.

### THREE ASPECTS OF THIS TRUTH

Even the highest celestial realms where the content of happiness and felicity is far more exquisite and sublime than the happiness experienced by ordinary mortals, form part of the ever-changing nature of the phenomenal world. These two aspects of *Dukkha* are known in Buddhism as *Dukkha Dukkhatā* (physical and mental suffering) and *Viparināma Dukkhatā* (suffering caused by change). The comprehension and realisation of these two aspects of *Dukkha* do not require much explanation as they are the common lot of mankind, but the third aspect of *Dukkha* crystallized in the First Noble Truth that the five aggregates of existence are suffering (*Sankhāra Dukkhatā*) which indicate the philosophical aspect of suffering is of the utmost importance if one is to escape from the bonds and shackles of existence. (See *Dīgha Nikāya* 33).

In other words, it means that the human personality, not excluding other forms of life in the lower and ethereal realms of existence, is a mass of suffering as these five aggregates of existence contain in them the germ of dis-



satisfaction and are caught up within the vortex of change, never remaining the same for two consecutive moments. Therefore the Buddha has said that the world rests on *Dukkha*.

Human and other forms of existence in the ultimate analysis constitute suffering. We can best have a glimpse of this aspect of *Dukkha* when we consider the apt and vivid similes used by the Buddha in describing the five aggregates constituting an individual. He compares material form or body to a lump of foam, feeling to a bubble, perception to a mirage, mental formations to a plantain-trunk and consciousness to an illusion, and asks: "What essence, monks, could there be in a lump of foam, in a bubble, in a mirage, in a plantain-trunk in an illusion". (*Samyutta Nikāya III 140*).

Thus the word "*Dukkha*" (Suffering) has a more comprehensive meaning than what the English word "suffering" denotes. It is used in the physical, psychological and philosophical senses, covering the whole gamut of the experience of beings in the *Kāma*, *Rūpa* and *Arūpa* worlds.

## SECOND NOBLE TRUTH

Now let us examine the Second Noble Truth—The Truth of the Origin of Suffering. The cause of suffering which all beings are subjected to is not due to some extraneous force, but to forces within themselves. It is due to wanting and desire. The Buddha states in the first discourse the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering thus: "There is this Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering; it is craving, which produces future becoming, is accompanied by indulgence and greed, delighting in this and that, that is to say, craving for sense-desires, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming".

Thus we see that as long as we are dominated by desire as long as the fever of craving rages, so long the fire of life will burn.

*TANHĀ* is the fuel that keeps the fires of life burning, and *Tanhā* is of three kinds, namely, the craving for sensual pleasures (*Kāma-tanhā*), the craving for continued existence



(*Bhava-tanhā*) and the craving for extinction (*Vibhava-tanhā*). The most binding of the three is craving for continued existence; for *Bhavatanhā* is the force that not merely keeps men tied to the wheel of life but also makes it difficult even for the gods to let go. The nearest equivalent to this is the will to live or the desire for immortality.

Desire or *Tanhā*, therefore, appears in many forms, ranging from ungovernable lust to little yearnings of our heart. What indeed are our many disappointments in life, but our desires which remain unsatisfied? From what does anger usually spring, but from the action of another that is contrary to our own? Whence comes worry and anxiety, if not for the fear that things will not turn out as we expect them to be? Desire or craving, therefore, is seen to be the chief agent of this dream called life, this nightmare with its fair faces and false hearts, its howling righteousness on the surface and utter hollowness beneath.

Self-evident facts are often apt to be overlooked. Hence the Buddha employed so many different similes to portray the transitoriness, the illusion, the unworthiness and the dangers of craving. It is not only to a consuming fire that craving has been compared by the Buddha. He has compared it to a net that ensnares and clings to one, to the on-rushing current of a river which carries away everything that comes before it and to a seamstress who brings two ends together and binds them. Each one of these similes reveals some particular aspect of *Tanhā*.

### THIRD NOBLE TRUTH

The Third Noble Truth is the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering. At least one can have a glimpse of that glorious attainment of *Nibbāna*, when one reflects on the paean of joy uttered by the Buddha when He attained Supreme Enlightenment.

“Verily have I wandered through many a birth, seeking the builder of this house. Painful indeed is repeated births.

"Now, O Builder of the house, you are seen! Never again shall you build. All your rafters are shattered, the ridge pole cast down. My mind has attained to the unconditioned; the cravings are extinguished"! (*Dhammapada* vs. 153-4).

The house is the body; the builder is craving, Passions are the rafters and the ridge pole is ignorance.

"For through the complete fading away and extinction of craving (*Tanhā*), clinging to existence (*Upādāna*) is extinguished; through the cessation of clinging the process of Becoming (*Bhava*) is extinguished; through the extinction of becoming, Rebirth (*Jāti*) is extinguished, and through the extinction of rebirth, decay and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, sorrow and despair are extinguished. Thus comes about the extinction of this entire mass of Suffering". (*Samyutta-Nikāya* 12).

### NIBBĀNA IS NOT EXTINCTION

Some scholars try to make out that *Nibbāna* is nothingness or extinction. But a careful examination of the Buddhist texts does not in any way substantiate such an erroneous view, but on the contrary reveals that *Nibbāna* is a supramundane state of unalloyed happiness. However, it does not mean that it is a happiness that one could experience through the senses. This fact is brought out in the dialogue between Udāyi and the great Sāriputta.

### HAPPINESS OF NIBBĀNA

"The Venerable Sāriputta addressing the monks said: "It is *Nibbāna*, friends, that is happiness; it is *Nibbāna*, friends, that is happiness. Then the Venerable Udāyi asked—"But what, friend Sāriputta, is happiness, since there is no feeling?" "Just this, friend, is happiness that therein there is no feeling". (*Anguttara Nikāya*. IV 414). This saying of the Venerable Sāriputta is fully supported by the Buddha thus; "Whatever is experienced, sensed, felt, all that is suffering". (*Yamkiñci Vedayitam Tam Dukkasmim ti*) (*Samyutta Nikāya* II 53).

To say that *Nibbāna* is nothingness simply because one cannot perceive it with the five senses, is as illogical as to conclude that light does not exist simply because the blind do not see it. In a well-known fable the fish, which was acquainted only with water, arguing with the turtle, triumphantly concluded that there existed no land, because it received "No" to all his queries.<sup>1</sup>

### FABLE OF THE FISH AND TURTLE

"Once upon a time there was a fish. And just because it was a fish, it had lived all its life in the water and knew nothing whatever about anything else but water. And one day as it swam about in the pond where all its days had been spent, it happened to meet a turtle of its acquaintance who had just come back from a little excursion on the land".

"Good day, Mr. Turtle! said the fish, I have not seen you for a long time. Where have you been?"

"Oh", said the turtle, "I have just been for a trip on dry land".

"On dry land!" exclaimed the fish. "What do you mean by on dry land? There is no dry land. I had never seen such a thing. Dry land is nothing".

"Well", said the turtle good-naturedly. "If you want to think so, of course you may, there is no one who can hinder you. But that's where I've been, all the same".

"O come", said the fish. "Try to talk sense. Just tell me now what is this land of yours like? Is it all wet?"

"No, it is not wet", said the turtle.

"Is it nice and fresh and cool?" asked the fish.

"No, it is not nice and fresh and cool", the turtle replied.

"Is it clear so that light can come through it?"

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1. For a detailed account see author's book "Is Nibbana Extinction?"

"No, it is not clear. Light cannot come through it".

"Is it soft and yielding, so that I could move my fins about it and push my nose through it?"

"No, it is not soft and yielding. You could not swim in it".

"Does it move or flow in streams?"

"No, it neither moves nor flows in streams?"

"Does it ever rise up into waves then, with white foams in them?" asked the fish, impatient at this string of Noes.

"No"! replied the turtle truthfully. "It never rises up into waves that I have seen".

"There now", exclaimed the fish triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you that this land of yours was just nothing? I have just asked, and you have answered me that it is neither wet nor cool, not clear nor soft and that it does not flow in streams nor rise up into waves. And if it isn't a single one of these things what else is it but nothing? Don't tell me".

"Well, well," said the turtle, "If you are determined to think that dry land is nothing, I suppose you must just go on thinking so. But any one who knows what is water and what is land would say you were just a silly fish, for you think that anything you have never known is nothing just because you have never known it".

"And with that the turtle turned away and, leaving the fish behind in its little pond of water, set out on another excursion over the dry land that was nothing".<sup>1</sup>

It is evident from this interesting story that neither can the turtle, who is acquainted with both land and sea, explain to the fish the real nature of land, nor can the fish grasp what is land since it is acquainted only with the sea. In the same way *Arahats* who are acquainted with both the mundane and the supramundane cannot explain to a

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g. The Four Noble Truths by Bhikkhu Silācara pp. 41-43.

worldling what exactly the supramundane is in mundane terms, nor can a worldling understand the supramundane merely through mundane knowledge.

If *Nibbāna* is nothingness, then it necessarily must coincide with space (*Ākāsa*). Both space and *Nibbāna* are eternal and unchanging. The former is eternal because it is nothing in itself. The latter is spaceless and timeless. With regard to the difference between space and *Nibbāna*, it may briefly be said that space is not, but *Nibbāna* is.

The Buddha speaking of the different planes of existence makes special reference to a "Realm of Nothingness" (*Ākiñcaṇṇāyatana*).

### POSITIVE TERMS FOR NIBBĀNA

"The fact that *Nibbāna* is realized as one of the mental objects (*vatthudhamma*), decidedly proves that it is not a state of nothingness. If it were so, the Buddha would not have described its state in such terms as "Infinite" (*Ananta*) "Non-conditioned" (*Asaṃkhata*), "Incomparable" (*Anūpameya*), "Supreme" (*Anuttara*), "Highest" (*Para*), "Beyond" (*Pāra*), "Highest Refuge" (*Parāyana*), "Safety" (*Tāna*), "Security" (*Khema*), "Happiness" (*Suva*), "Unique" (*Kevala*), "Abodeless" (*Anālaya*), "Imperishable" (*Akkhara*), "Absolute Purity" (*Visuddhi*), "Supramundane" (*Lokuttara*), "Immortality" (*Amata*), "Emancipation" (*Mutti*), "Peace" (*Sānti*) etc.

In the *Udāna* and *Itivuttaka* the Buddha refers to *Nibbāna* as follows:—

"There is, O Bhikkhus, an unborn (*ajāta*), unoriginated (*abhūta*), unmade (*akata*) and non-conditioned state (*asaṃkhata*). If, O Bhikkhus, there were not this unborn, unoriginated, unmade and non-conditioned, an escape from the born, originated, made, and conditioned, would not be possible. As there is an unborn, unoriginated, unmade and non-conditioned state, an escape from the born, originated, made, conditioned is possible".

According to the commentary these four terms are used as synonyms.



*Ajāta* means that it has not sprung up on account of causes or conditions (*hetupaccayā*). *Abhūta* (lit, not become) means that it has not arisen. As it has not sprung up from a cause and has not come into being, it is not made (*akata*) by any means. Becoming and arising are the characteristics of conditioned things such as mind and matter, but *Nibbāna*, being not subject to those conditions, is non-conditioned (*asamkhata*). See Woodward, Verses of Uplift, p. 98, As it was said, p. 142.

The *Itivuttaka* states:

“The born, become, produced, compounded made,  
And thus not lasting, but of birth and death  
An aggregate, a nest of sickness, brittle,  
A thing by food supported, come to be,  
’Twere no fit thing to take delight in such.  
The ’escape therefrom, the real, beyond the sphere  
Of reason, lasting, unborn, unproduced,  
The sorrowless, the stainless path that ends,  
The things of woe, the peace from worries, bliss”.

The *Nibbāna* of Buddhists is, therefore, neither a state of nothingness nor a mere cessation. What it is not, one can definitely say. What precisely it is, one cannot adequately express in conventional terms as it is an unique experience”.<sup>1</sup> It is for self-realization (*paccattam veditabbo*).

The simile of the fire gone out (*Majjhima* 1, 486) or the lamp that is extinguished has been often compared by some ill-informed and exparte critics of the *Dhamma* to the *Arahat* after his Death, or in other words, to *Anupādisesa-Nibbāna-Dhātu*. This simile has been used to substantiate their theory that *Nibbāna* is Extinction. But it should be clearly understood that the simile is used with reference to the five aggregates that are completely extinguished

1. The Life and Teachings of the Buddha by Ven. Nārada Thera pp. 494-496.

like the fire going out, when the *Arahat* dies, and not to *Nibbāna*. "A *Tathāgata* released from what is called body, sensation (etc.,) is profound, immeasurable, hard to fathom like the deep ocean". (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1. 486).

### WHAT HAPPENS TO THE ARAHAT AFTER HIS DEATH

As a flame blown to and fro by the wind goes out and cannot be registered, so says the Buddha, an *Arahat*, set free from mind and matter, has disappeared and cannot be registered.

Has such an *Arahat* then merely disappeared, or does he indeed no longer exist?

For him who has disappeared, states the *Sūtta Nipāta*, there exists no form by which they could say, "he is", When all conditions are cut off, all matter for discussion is also cut off.

The *Udāna* explains this intricate point thus:

"As the fiery sparks from a forge are one by one extinguished.

And no one knows where they have gone—

So it is with those who have attained to complete emancipation,

Who have crossed the flood of desire,

Who have entered the calm delight, of those no trace remains". (See Woodward, Verses of Uplift, p. 114).

The *Majjhima Nikāya* also relates an interesting discussion between the Buddha and Vacchagotta concerning this very question.

Vacchagotta, a wandering ascetic, approached the Buddha and questioned:

"But, Gotama, where is the Bhikkhu who is delivered of mind reborn?

He was of course referring to the *Araha*..

The Buddha replied:—"Vaccha, to say that he is reborn would not fit the case.

"Then, Gotama, he is not reborn.

"Vaccha, to say that he is not reborn would not fit the case.

"Then, Gotama, he is both reborn and not reborn.

"Vaccha, to say that he is both reborn and not reborn would not fit the case.

"Then, Gotama, he is neither reborn nor not reborn.

"Vaccha, to say that he is neither reborn, nor not reborn would not fit the case.

Vaccha was baffled on hearing these seemingly inconsistent answers, and, in his confusion, exclaimed:

"Gotama, I am at a loss to think in this matter, and I have become greatly confused.

"Enough, O Vaccha, Be not at a loss to think in this matter, and be not greatly confused. Profound, O Vaccha, is this doctrine, recondite and difficult of comprehension, good, excellent, and not to be reached by mere reasoning, subtle and intelligible only to the wise and it is a hard doctrine for you to learn, who belong to another sect, to another faith, to another persuasion, to another discipline, and who sit at the feet of another teacher. Therefore, O Vaccha, I shall now question you, and do you make answer as may seem to you good. What think you, Vaccha? Suppose a fire were to burn in front of you, would you be aware that fire was burning in front of you.

Gōtama, if a fire were to burn in front of me, I should be aware that a fire was burning in front of me.

"But suppose, Vaccha, someone were to ask you: "On what does this fire that is burning in front of you depend? What would you answer, Vaccha?

"I would answer, O Gotama, "it is on fuel of grass and wood that this fire burning in front of me depends".

"But, Vaccha, if the fire in front of you were to become extinct, would you be aware that the fire in front of you has become extinct?"

"Gotama, if the fire in front of me were to become extinct, I should be aware that the fire in front of me had become extinct.

"But, Vaccha, if someone were to ask you: "In what direction has that fire gone, East or West, North or South? What would you say, Vaccha?"

"The question would not fit the case, Gotama, for the fire depended on fuel of grass and wood, and when that fuel has all gone, and it can get no other, being thus without nutriment, it is said to be extinct.

"In exactly the same way, Vaccha, all forms, sensations, perceptions, mental activities, and consciousness have been abandoned, uprooted, made like a palmyra stump, become extinct, and not liable to spring up in the future.

"The Saint, O Vaccha, who has been released from what are styled the Five Aggregates, is deep, immeasurable like the mighty ocean. To say that he is reborn would not fit the case. To say that he is not reborn would not fit the case. To say that he is neither reborn nor not reborn would not fit the case".

One cannot say that the *Arahat* is reborn as all passions that condition rebirth are eradicated, nor can one say that the *Arahat* is annihilated, for there is nothing to annihilate.

#### CHARGE OF EXTINCTION REFUTED

The charge of extinction is discussed and refuted in the conversation between Sāriputta and the Elder Yamaka. In the monk Yamaka the following wrong view had once arisen: "Thus do I understand the doctrine expounded by the Blessed One; that he in whom all biases have vanished, at the dissolution of the Body, after death, will become annihilated and will no longer exist after death". (*Sāriputta*) "What do you think, Brother Yamaka, are corporeality.....feeling.....perception.....mental formations.....or Consciousness, permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, Venerable Sir....."

"Now, do you consider corporeality etc., as the Perfect One?"

"No, Venerable Sir".

"Or do you consider the Perfect One is contained therein?"

"No, Venerable Sir".

"Or do you consider all these groups combined as the Perfect One?"

"No, Venerable Sir".

"Or do you think that the Perfect One is without corporeality, or without feeling, without perception, without mental formations, without consciousness?"

"No, Venerable Sir".

"Now, since you cannot, even during life-time make out the Perfect One according to truth and reality, how can you rightly maintain that the Perfect One will, at the dissolution of the body, become annihilated and no longer continue after death? Should someone ask me, what will become of the Holy One, I should answer thus: "Corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness are impermanent, and what is impermanent, that is woeful; and what, is woeful, that will become extinguished and annihilated". (*Samyutta-Nikāya XXII*, 85).<sup>1</sup>

### UNCONDITIONED STATE

The Buddha Himself has stated that there is a "state" uncaused, unborn, etc. This cannot be described by such terms as existent or non-existent because such terms are only possible within the experience of our "living", and it will also be seen that we create the term "non-existent" in relation to our awareness of a thing called "existence". But *Nibbāna* has nothing to do with these. When therefore, we destroy the five aggregates constituting a being, we cannot say that *Nibbāna* was the direct result of such destruction. For it then implies that *Nibbāna* has been caused by the destruction of these aggregates, which cannot be, because *Nibbāna* is "uncaused, unborn" etc., Of course,

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1. Author's book *Is Nibbana Extinction?* pp. 33-49.



the five aggregates are a hindrance to our fully realizing *Nibbāna*. They are obstacles and therefore it is necessary for us to go through the process of destroying these aggregates. The destruction of the aggregates can be compared to our removing the veil of Ignorance to realize what is "Beyond" but the mere removal of Ignorance certainly has in no way caused what was Beyond".

### WHERE IS NIBBĀNA

In the *Milinda Panhā* the Venerable Nāgasena answers this question thus:

"There is no spot looking East, South, West, or North above, below, or beyond, where *Nibbāna* is situated and yet *Nibbāna* is; and he who orders his life aright, grounded in virtue and with rational attention, may realize it whether he lives in Greece, China, Alexandria, or in Kosala.

"Just as fire is not stored up in any particular place but arises when the necessary conditions exist, so *Nibbāna* is said not to exist in a particular place, but it is attained when the necessary conditions are fulfilled".

In the *Rohitassa Sutta* the Buddha states. "In this very one-fathom-long body, along with its perceptions and thoughts, do I proclaim the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world and the path leading to the cessation of the world".<sup>1</sup>

Here world means suffering. The cessation of the world, therefore, means the cessation of suffering which is *Nibbāna*.

One's *Nibbāna* is dependent upon this one-fathom body. It is not something that is created nor is it something to be created.<sup>2</sup>

1. *Imasmim byāmamatte y'eva kālebare sāsaññāmhī samanake lokañ ca paññāpemi lokasamudayañ ca lokanirodhañ ca, lokanirodhagaminim patipadañ ca paññāpemi.* (*Samyutta Nikāya*, i, p. 62)

2. *Pattabbam eva h'etam maggena, na uppādetabbam* Verily this (*Nibbāna*) is to be attained (or realized) by means of the four Paths of Sainthood, and is not to be produced—*Visuddhi Magga*.

*Nibbāna* is there where the four elements of cohesion (*āpo*), extension (*pathavi*), heat (*tejo*) and motion (*vāyo*) find no footing.

Referring to where *Nibbāna* is, *Samyutta Nikāya* states:

“Where the four elements that cleave, and stretch,  
And burn, and move no further footing find”.

In the *Udāna* the Buddha says:

“Just as, O Bhikkhūs, notwithstanding those rivers that reach the great ocean and the torrents of rain that fall from the sky, neither a deficit nor a surplus is perceptible in the great ocean, even so despite the many *Bhikkhūs* that enter the remainderless *Pari-Nibbāna* there is neither a deficit nor a surplus in the element of *Nibbāna*”.

*Nibbāna* is therefore, not a kind of heaven where a transcendental ego resides, but a *Dhamma* (an attainment) which is within the reach of us all.

An eternal heaven, which provides all forms of pleasures desired by man and where one enjoys happiness to one's heart's content, is practically inconceivable. It is absolutely impossible to think that such a place could exist permanently anywhere.

Granting that there is no place where *Nibbāna* is stored up, King Milinda questions Venerable Nāgasena whether there is any basis whereon a man stand and, ordering his life aright, realize *Nibbāna*.

“Yes, O King, there is such a basis.

“Which, then Venerable Nāgasena, is that basis?

“Virtue, O King, is that basis. For, if grounded in virtue, and careful in attention, whether in the land of the Scythians or the Greeks, whether in China or in Tartary, whether in Alexandria or in Nikumba, whether in Benares or in Kosala, whether in Kashmir

or in Gandhāra, whether on a mountain top or in the highest heavens,—wherever he may be, the man who orders his life aright will attain *Nibbāna*".

### WHO ATTAINS NIBBĀNA?

This question must necessarily be set aside as irrelevant, for Buddhism denies the existence of a permanent entity or an immortal soul.

The so-called being of which we often hear as the "vestment of the soul" is a mere bundle of conditioned factors.

The *Arahat Bhikkhuni* Vajirā says:

"And just as when the parts are rightly set,  
The word "chariot" ariseth (in our minds)  
So doth our usage covenant to say  
A being when the aggregates are there".  
(*Kindred Savings* part I, p. 170)

According to Buddhism the so-called being consists of mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) which constantly change with lightning rapidity. Apart from these two composite factors there exists no permanent soul or an unchanging entity. The so-called "I" is also an illusion.

Instead of an eternal soul or an illusory "I" Buddhism posits a dynamic life-flux (*santati*) which flows ad infinitum as long as it is fed with ignorance and craving. When these two root causes are eradicated by any individual on attaining *Arahatship*, they cease to flow with his final death.

In conventional terms one says that the *Arahat* has attained Parinibbāna or passed away into *Nibbāna*.

"As right now, and here" there is neither a permanent ego nor an identical being it is needless to state that there can be no "I" or a soul (*atta*) in *Nibbāna*.

The *Visuddhi Magga* states:—

"Misery only doth exist, none miserable;  
Nor dcer is there, nought save the deed is found;  
Nibbāna is, but not the man who seeks it;  
The path exists, but not the traveller on it".

The chief difference between the Buddhist conception of *Nibbāna* and the Hindu conception of *Nirvāna* or *Mukti* lies in the fact that Buddhists view their goal without an eternal soul and creator, while Hindus do believe in an eternal soul and a creator.

This is the reason why Buddhism can neither be called Eternalism nor Nihilism.

In *Nibbāna* nothing is “eternalised” nor is anything “annihilated”.

As Sir Edwin Arnold says:—

“If any teach *Nirvāna* is to cease,  
Say unto such they lie.  
If any teach *Nirvāna* is to live,  
Say unto such they err”.

#### FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH—NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

The Fourth Noble Truth is the truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering, which is the Noble Eightfold Path. This Path consists of: Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

The Noble Eightfold Path is best understood if it is considered from the three divisions under which it is classified. The first two factors, namely, Right Understanding and Right Thought, are grouped under Wisdom (*Pañña*). The next three factors, namely, Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood, are enumerated as Virtue (*Sīla*). The last three namely, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration are grouped under Concentration. (*Samādhi*) (*Majjhima Nikāya* No. 44).

These three divisions of the Path are summarized in the well known stanza of the *Dhammapada* verse 183.

“To refrain from all evil,  
To do what is good,  
To purify the mind,  
This is the teaching of the Buddhas”.

It is interesting to note that under wisdom are grouped two important factors, namely, Right Understanding and Right Thought. Wisdom is not only the appraisal of the nature of things or mere abstract intellectualism, but it is blended and harmonized with the chastening virtues of selfless detachment, benevolence and compassion—the three kinds of Right Thoughts. Therefore, according to Buddhism a person is truly wise if he has these qualities integrated in his personality. This fact has often been overlooked by scholars who have classified Buddhism as an abstract philosophy.

### WISDOM AND COMPASSION

Buddhism emphasizes two qualities that should be developed for a person to be perfect. They are Wisdom and Compassion. Wisdom represents the intellectual aspect of the personality and Compassion (*Karunā*) represents the emotional qualities of a person. If one develops the emotional neglecting the intellectual side, one may become a good-hearted fool, while to develop only the intellectual side neglecting the emotional facet of one's personality makes a person a clever rogue without feelings for others. Therefore, to be perfect, one has to develop both in equal measure.

### VIRTUE (*SĪLA*)

The object of Virtue (*Sīla*) is to achieve refinement by realization of the vanity and futility of the fleeting pleasures of this contemporary world, and the suppression of "craving" that arises in us for the satisfaction of sense-desires. The observance of virtue, therefore, minimizes and attenuates the misery, pain and anguish in the world. And what is more, we gradually get rid of craving (*Tanhā*), and experience a greater measure of happiness in this world itself. Virtue, according to the Buddha, is not an end in itself but only a means to an end. It is practised for the gaining of concentration.

### CONCENTRATION (*SAMĀDHI*)

With the next division of the Noble Eightfold Path, Concentration (*Samādhi*), we are able in a more effective way to reduce the irksome *Tanhā-Dukkha* combination.



For it is in the mind that everything arises. The Buddha eloquently expresses this idea as follows:—

“The mind is the forerunner of everything,  
Mind is supreme,  
All is made of mind”. (*Dhammapāda Verse 1*).

Therefore with the control and discipline of the mind we make a direct onslaught at the very roots of suffering and as a result the measure of happiness experienced is more exquisite, sublime and refined than the happiness produced by virtue.

How is it possible to control the mind? Three important factors are prerequisites for it. As we have already seen they are embodied in the *Samādhi* group of the Noble Eightfold Path, namely, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. With the help of these powerful and constructive mental factors, one could diminish the beneficial and malefic effects of greed, hate and ignorance, which harass and torment the minds of worldlings at unguarded moments.

Thus, for instance, when thoughts of greed and lust arise in our mind, by quickly turning the mind to something else of a wholesome nature, the potency and strength of those greedy and lustful thoughts would be considerably reduced and as a result the source of suffering (*Tanhā*) diminished. In like manner when thoughts of anger arise in our mind, the exercise of mind control will certainly avert the harmful effects of such thoughts. But in fact, we are often completely overwhelmed and overpowered by such thoughts as we react subjectively to them. But when we look at such thoughts dispassionately and objectively, as we would see our reflection in a mirror, they would automatically disappear.

### CONTROL OF THE MIND

This fact is brought out in this simple illustration given in the Buddhist Texts. “Venerable Sir, if there are six holes in an ant-hill, and a lizard enters that ant-hill through one of these holes, if you wish to catch the lizard, you must close or block up five of these six holes, leaving one hole open, and catch the lizard when he comes out through

the hole he entered". Just so, when one deals with the six sense-doors, one must close five of these doors, and have the door of mind open and alert. Thus when one practises *Indriya-Sanvarasīla* or restraint of the senses and guards and prevents the sense-doors taking in external ideas which continuously impinge upon the sense-organs then one is left to deal with the thoughts and ideas that arise from within oneself. This leads eventually to what is termed in Buddhist parlance as *Cittaviveka*, or peace of mind, due to the inhibition of the five mental hindrances. They are sensuous desires, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry and doubts. How these mental hindrances hinder the development of mind and prevent clear thinking, could be gauged from the graphic and striking similes used by the Buddha to describe the real nature of these defilements.

Sensuous desire is compared to water mixed with manifold colours, ill-will to boiling water, sloth and torpor to water covered by mosses, restlessness and worry to agitated water whipped by the wind, and doubts to turbid and muddy water. Just as in such water one cannot perceive one's own reflection, so in the presence of these five mental hindrances one cannot clearly discern one's own benefit nor that of others nor that of both.

A greater measure of happiness is experienced when the three mental factors, Virtue (*Sīla*), Concentration (*Samādhi*) and Wisdom (*Paññā*) function harmoniously, inseparably and effectively. It is then that it is possible to eradicate the defilements of the mind and attain Supreme Enlightenment.

"This is the path itself,  
For none other leads  
To purity of Vision,  
If you follow it and so confuse King Māra, all suffering will end. Since I have learned how to remove the thorns.  
I have revealed the path. You yourselves should  
(always) strive, *Tathāgatas* only teach. Those who walk in meditation free themselves from Māra's bondage".

(*Dhammapada* Verses 274-275)

## NIKINI POYA

The *Nikini Poya* which falls on the full-moon day of the month of August is an event of singular importance and significance in the dispensation of the Buddha as the monks and laymen, particularly the monks, pay special attention to the observance of religious practices and devote their time to the practice of meditation, and preach the *Dhamma* more frequently to the layman. This promotes and strengthens the relationship between the *Sangha* and the lay devotees, which is of the utmost importance for the progress and maintenance of the Buddha *Sāsana*.

### VAS (RAINY SEASON)

Soon after the Buddha preached his first sermon to the five ascetics of Isipatana and the vast concourse of devas and *brahmas*, the rains came. His preaching tours were curtailed and he followed the ancient practice coming down from the lineal predecessors of the Buddhas and the great *Arahats* to spend the rainy season (*Vas*) in one place of residence without wandering forth in the country at large on *Dhamma-dūta* work.

In course of time this ancient and hallowed practice was not observed by fledgling monks who were yet worldlings. They braved the elements and wandered about defying the inclement weather. Various allegations were levelled at these monks by followers of *Niganta Nataputta* who charged them of going about in the rainy season treading on the sprouting blades of grass which they held were living creatures whose lives were as precious and sacred as that of human beings. This invariably led the public to make the distinct comparison between the disciples of the Buddha and those of the Jain leader, *Niganta Nataputta*. The general public went to the extent of branding the Buddhist monks as shameless individuals committing the act of killing without any scruples or compunction quite contrary to the principles which they were supposed to adhere to.

These unwarranted allegations reached the ears of the Blessed One. He declared in unequivocal terms by way of clarification of the baseless, stupid, and erroneous view held against his disciples that they were committing the evil action of destroying life. He refuted the erroneous, extremist view of Niganta Nataputta that plants and the vegetable kingdom possessed consciousness. He absolved the monks from blame and possible guilt and transgression, fabricated by the heretics and the general public.

### DWELLING PLACE

However, the Buddha conceded the fact that it was in keeping with the decorum and dignity of a monk, followed with meticulous care and religious devotion by the Buddhas and *Arahats* that they should dwell in a place during the rainy season. The Blessed One, therefore, laid down the precept which enshrines his views on the subject, *Anu-jānāmi Bhikkhave Vassāne Vassam Upagantum*, which means "O monks, I hereby both request you and permit you to observe *Vas* (retreat) during the *Vassāna* season". Thereafter *Vas* was observed with great care by all monks whether they were *Arahats* or worldlings either on the full-moon of *Esala* or for a later *Vas*, a month after the full-moon day of *Esala*, without the slightest infringement of even the minor rules.

Why did the Buddha decree the *Vas* observance to the *Sangha* as a whole? The Blessed One himself and his great and noble disciples observed this *Vas* retirement period from the start. They realised the value of quiet meditation and spiritual attainments, and for helping others to achieve the higher and nobler things of life. It was a period for recuperation after strenuous months of intensive preaching tours, and afforded an opportunity for teaching the *Dhamma* to the novices and junior monks. For the Buddha and *Arahats* there was no need to make decrees. They knew what is right and what is wrong. As time passed and the numbers of the *Sangha* increased so did the popularity of the *Buddha Dhamma*. Throughout the *Majjhima-desa*,



there were large numbers of monks who were worldlings who did need rules for their guidance. It was to meet the requirements of these monks that the *Vinaya* expanded and took shape.

The Buddha never said; "Do not go about, for you will crush green herbs, hurt vegetable life, and destroy the life of many small living beings during the rains". These things were brushed aside from the very start, and the emphasis was on a period of intensive meditation and the development of the *Jhānas* and attainment of Nibbāna. From the very start bhikkhus were encouraged to take up a *Kammatthāna*, a subject for meditation, which many did from the Buddha himself, and devote themselves wholeheartedly to it during the *Vas*.

That the minor question, of the "rain" itself, was ignored from the very start, is shown by the fact that this particular *Vas* period was observed throughout the length and breadth of the vast Indian sub-continent, although the actual time of "the rains" varied much in the various kingdoms from North to South and East to West. Wherever the *Sangha* went, in the Buddha's time or thereafter, the *Vas* period was never altered, for its actual *raison d'être* was never "the rains" but the essential opportunity for a period of quiet meditation.

So when the *Sangha* came to Lanka the question never arose in the minds of *Arahanta* Thera Mahinda and his companion *Arahats* that Lanka's rainy season was different. Mahinda and his brother *Arahats* held their first *Vas* in Lanka a month after their arrival here, and from that time on the *Sangha* of Lanka, with hosts of *Arahats* in the early times, uptill this day, observed the *Vas* as ordained by the Blessed One. This hallowed practice is observed by monks in all *Theravāda* countries.

### OBSERVANCE OF *VAS*

As a classic example of how *bhikkhus* of old strictly observed the *Vas*, the *Vinaya* gives us the story of a group of thirty *Paveyyaka* monks. At that time the Blessed One



was dwelling at Sāvatti in the Jetavana Temple. A group of thirty monks had walked from far in the West, with the special hope that they might spend the *Vas* period in the happy presence of the Blessed One. But it was not to be. While they were on the way to Sāvatti, the *Vas*—the full-moon of Esala—arrived and though so close to the Buddha, a mere 40 miles, they, as dutiful monks entered upon the *Vas* at Sāketa.

Of this group of thirty it is said that, while not one was an *Arahat*, neither was a single one of them an ordinary monk. That is, every one of the group was a *Sekha* who had entered into the fruit of *Sotāpatti*, *Sakadāgāmi* or *Anāgāmi* stages of sanctity. All of them were saints (*Ariyas*) and all were forest dwellers all three-robed, using the refuse-rag robes, all depending on the alms bowl. And there, at Sāketa, they remained for the full three-month period of *Vas* and then the *Vas* period ended and when they had done their *Pavārana* (Termination of *Vas*) they immediately set out to fulfil their ardent wish to see the Buddha. And though the rain was yet falling, the way was swampy and their robes got rain-soaked and mud-stained. However they hurried happily to the Jetavana Temple at Sāvatti. This story clearly shows how even to see the Buddha, those great theras of old would not break the *Vinaya* rules.

No monk, according to the *Vinaya*, may break *Vas* except under special circumstances. He must wait the full three months and hold the *Pavārana* or *Vas-ending* ceremony. Provided he returns before seven days he may leave the *Vas* dwelling, under certain specified conditions. He must always return before seven days. If he does not, it is an offence, for he will have broken his *Vas*. As permitted reasons for breaking *Vas*, we find the following: Life is threatened by beasts of prey, by snakes, by robbers, demoniacal disturbances, lack of food, fire or flood destroying

the *Vas* abode, lack of medicine or proper service, various temptations of women, treasure, etc., division in the *Sangha* and so forth.

### BENEFITS OF *VAS*

Now where should *Vas* be observed and what are its benefits to the monks and the laity? The place where *Vas* is observed should be congenial and conducive to the spiritual welfare and mental development of the monk. The ideal conditions for the observance of this hallowed practice would be in the open country or the foot of a tree in conformity with the austere simplicity and serene contentment associated with that of the life of a monk. But owing to the inclemency of weather it is difficult for the monk to live in such conditions. A small house or an Ashram free from the din and noise would be the next best alternative. Such an abode will be highly conducive to meditation which is one of the prime objects of observing *Vas* besides affording a convenient opportunity for preaching the *Dhamma* more frequently to the laity for their moral and spiritual advancement.

It is recorded in our sacred texts that during the time of the Blessed One a large number of his disciples profitably made use of this opportunity of attaining the deathless goal of *Nibbāna*. The great *Arahat*, Cakkhupāla, is reported to have once exhorted some recalcitrant monks to engage themselves in continuous meditation and escape without delay from the bonds and shackles of existence by experiencing the Hyper—Cosmic—*Nibbāna*.

As far as the layman is concerned the real significance of *Vas* would be that he will have ample opportunities of discussing various aspects of the *Dhamma* with monks, which will inevitably lead to his moral advancement and spiritual development.

### UPŌSATHA CEREMONY

It is significant to note that the monks during this period of *Vas* performed the *Upōsatha* ceremony more frequently and preached to the laity more regularly and observed the

tenets enunciated in the *Ariyawansa Sutta*. In this discourse is enshrined the cardinal and distinguishing features of the *bhikkhu*-life which indeed is his *Vademecum*. In brief the discourse deals with the four fundamental principles of a successful *bhikkhu* life: contentment and satisfaction with (1) whatever robes he gets, (2) whatever food he obtains, (3) whatever lodgings and medical requirements provided with, (4) and engages himself in meditation.

Now what is the significance of the *Upōsatha Ceremony* which is observed scrupulously during *Vas*. The main business at an *Upōsatha Ceremony* is the recital and interrogation of the *Pātimokkha* rules—for the proper conduct of the monastic life. The procedure for convening an *Upōsatha* assembly and the conduct of business as well as the rules of the *Pātimokkha* are dealt with comprehensively in the *Mahāvagga* and the *Cullavagga* of the *Vinaya Pitaka*.

It is worthwhile to know that of the Three Pitakas which contain the sum total of the teachings of the Compassionate Buddha, the *Vinaya Pitaka* stands pre-eminent, and that for a very satisfying reason. At the First Convocation held at Rajagaha, the President *Arahant* Maha Kassapa asked the assembled monks; "Which of the three baskets of the *Buddha-Dhamma* shall we rehearse first?" The monks (*Arahants* all) replied with one voice: "Venerable Sir, the *Vinaya* first, for it is the life-blood of the *Sāsana*, which is indispensable for the higher life".

The stepping-stone to the higher life is Purity of Morality (*sīlavissuddhi*) the first stage of the Seven Stages of Purity (*Satta-Visuddhi*). Purity of Morality consists of four restraints. The first is morality consisting in restraint with regard to the monk-rules (*Pātimokkha-samvara-sīla*). The *Pātimokkha* rules are 227 in all. The *Pātimokkha* is divided into nine sections for *bhikkhus* and into eight sections for *bhikkhunīs*.

### PATIMOKKHA RULES

Tradition has it that on a suggestion made by King Bimbisara, Lord Buddha gave his consent to the fortnightly meeting of monks for the purpose of discussing the Buddha-

*Dhamma* and the recital of the *Pātimokkha* rules. The days set apart were the day of the new-moon, and the day of the full-moon. Hence we have the expression *Upōsatha-kamma*.

In the early days of Buddhism the *Upōsatha* was held in the *āvāsa* or *ārāma* or *vihāra* where the monks resided. Later on, a special building came to be erected in the premises of the *āvāsa* itself called an *Upōsathagāra*, or *Simā* or as we call it *po-yage*. We could also see these edifices built on raised platforms in the middle of rivers. The *Vinaya* provides the dimensions of a *Simā*, and also the preliminary acts to be performed at the moment of initiating its construction.

There are also certain preliminaries to be seen to before the chapter of monks assemble in the *Upōsatha* hall. They are the removal of cobwebs and the sweeping of the floor, the arrangement of seats, the provision of lamps and drinking water. The days of the meeting has to be announced beforehand. The *pārisuddhi* (purity) of the participating chapter of monks has to be declared. Learned monks who are to put questions on the *Dhamma-Vinaya* and monks to answer them have to be selected. Finally, the completeness of the *Sangha* have to be assured. All the monks of the *āvāsa* have to be present in person or by proxy.

There is also provision made for members of another *āvāsa* outside the jurisdiction of the *āvāsa* where the *Upōsatha-kamma* is to be held, to be admitted into their assembly of monks. Monks were directed not to leave the *āvāsa* on the *Upōsatha* day except on urgent business of the *Sangha*. It is an offence to exclude deliberately the incoming (*āgantuka*) monks. There are occasions when *bhikkhus* from neighbouring *āvāsa* were invited to recite the *Pātimokkha* rules. *Bhikkhus* were enjoined to attend the *Upōsatha* ceremony fully dressed in the three robes.

At least four members were necessary to conduct the *Pātimokkha* assembly. At least two members were necessary for the declaration of *Pārisuddhi*. In either case their presence in the assembly was essential.



## VINAYA KAMMA

The most important business of an *Upōsatha* assembly is the declaration of *Pārisuddhi*, a *Vinaya Kamma* which absolves the participating monks from all acts of omission and commission, and which re-vivifies their moral purity. The following are debarred from attending the *Upōsatha* assembly; persons not admissable to the community of the *Sangha* and *bhikkhus* who are already undergoing punishment for breach of monastic rules. *Bhikkhunis*, *sāmaneras* and *sāmaneris* are not admitted to the *Upōsatha* hall. Laymen, of course, are persons who have no place in the *Upōsatha* ceremony.

The *Pārisuddhi* of the members was established by making each of the members declare that he had not committed any breach of the *Pātimokkha* rules during the preceding fortnight. If there happened to be members who had violated the lesser offences, in that case they had to confess individually their lapses and obtain explanation thereof. A prerequisite for the recitation of the *Pātimokkha* is that it should be interdicted if there were impure monks in the assembly. There were instances of monks who refused to acknowledge their guilt, as there are today.

But the monk, who delights in his *Pārisuddhi*, who guards his *Pārisuddhi*, seeks not the faults of others, but is ever mindful of his faults done or undone, with his mind unruffled he leads the even tenor of his life in the words of the *Dhammapāda* (verse 49);

“Yathā, ‘*pi bhamaro puṇṇhaṃ  
vannagandhaṃ ahethayaṃ  
Paleti rasam’ ādāya  
evam gāme munī care*”.

“As a bee without harming the flower,  
its colour, or its scent, flies away,  
collecting only the honey, even so  
should the sage wander in the village”.

(Translated by the *Nārada Maha Thera*).



## BINARA POYA

With the advent of the *Binara Poya*, which falls in the month of September, the monks show unstinted devotion to the *Dhamma* and scrupulously observe the *Vinaya* rules and in keeping with the sanctity of the occasion make every attempt to devote a greater part of their time in the practice of meditation (*Bhāvana*).

It is during this period, for the duration of three months, that the monks are particularly concerned about their inner purification and mental development as it has been during the time of the Blessed One when monks strove zealously and strenuously to attain the deathless state of *Nibbāna*.

It is noteworthy that the monks make every attempt to live up to the tenets embodied in the *Āriyawansa Sutta* which epitomise the cardinal virtues and exemplary life that is expected of a monk. This *sutta* enumerates the four *Āriyawansas* also known by such names as *Mahā Āriyawansa* and *Vamsa Sutta*.

## DISCIPLINARY CODE

There are four sections dealing with four important aspects of the Disciplinary Code of the monks. The first portion epitomises the contentment and satisfied state of the mind of the monk in regard to the robes given to him. He does not in any way give hint or suggestion to his *Dāyaka* (lay supporter) to secure robes in an unfair or improper way. In addition, he does not exalt himself or despise others. The guiding principle and keynote of his life is plain living, simplicity, contentment and light livelihood, devoid of attachment. The bare minimum regarding the requisites of life to maintain his body is enjoined on him. This theme runs like a golden thread throughout his mode of life and thinking. The same principle is applied with regard to (ii) whatever food he gets, and (iii) whatever

lodgings or medicinal requirements he is provided with, (iv) the monk with such a frame of mind takes to meditation with consummate ease and great felicity.

These sublime qualities will indeed contribute immeasurably to peace of mind, unalloyed happiness and serene joy and will assuredly make him a source of inspiration and a tower of strength to the laity. This in brief summarises the *Ariyawansa Sutta* which contains the lifeblood of a monk on which invariably depends the progress, perpetuation and upliftment of the *Buddha Sāsana*. Hence the importance of this *sutta*. In the light of the above facts this discourse is held in high esteem and reverence both by the *Sangha* and the laity.

### ĀRIYAWANSA SUTTA

According to the great commentator, Buddhaghosa, the quintessence of the Buddha's teachings are contained in this discourse. The first three *Āriyawansas* succinctly describe the whole of the *Vinaya Pitaka*. The last *Āriyawansa* sums up in one pregnant word the *Sutta* and the *Abhidhamma Pitakas*. Thus the preacher of this *sutta* gives in a nutshell the whole of the teachings of the Buddha.

The immense popularity of this *sutta* can be gauged from the fact that there are many references to it in the commentaries. The commentary to the *Anguttara Nikāya* gives the classic example of a woman who walked five yojanas suckling her infant child to listen to a sermon on the *Ariyawansa* by a learned and erudite monk, named *Dīghabhanaka Mahā Abhaya Thera*. Further, it is stated in this commentary that thirty monks who had retired to the sylvan solitudes at Gavaravala for *Vas* preached the *Mahā Ariyawansa* fortnightly on Poya days. The *Mahawamsa* records that King Vohara Tissa (269-291 A.C.) had established a regular offering of alms all over the island at every place where the *Ariyawansa Sutta* was preached.

### SUBJECTS OF MEDITATION

It was during this period in the Buddha's time that the monks made it a point to go to him and obtain a suitable subject of meditation and also gather hints and suggestions

in achieving success in their subjects of meditation. It is, therefore, relevant to discuss the types of meditation prescribed by the Buddha to suit the various temperaments of individuals and the techniques and methods adopted in giving subjects of meditation.

Kesi, a horse-trainer, once visited the Blessed One, and the following dialogue ensued which illustrates the way the Buddha trained his disciples:

"You, Kesi, are a trained man, a trainer of horses to be tamed. How do you train a horse to be tamed?"

"I train a horse to be tamed, venerable sir, by mild ways and harsh ways, also by both ways".

"Suppose, Kesi, a horse to be tamed, does not submit to your training, then what do you do with that horse?"

In such a case, venerable sir, I kill him.

For what reason?

Lest he bring discredit to my teacher's clan. Now venerable sir, the Blessed One is a peerless trainer of men to be tamed. How, venerable sir, does the Blessed One train a person to be tamed?

I too, Kesi, train a person to be tamed by mild ways and stern ways, also both ways. This, Kesi, is the mild Way: Thus is good conduct in body; thus is the result of good conduct in body. Thus is good conduct in speech; thus is the result of good conduct in speech. Thus is good conduct in thought; thus is the result of good conduct in thought. Thus are the devas (deities) and thus are the humans.

And this, Kesi, is the harsh way: Thus is evil conduct in body; thus is the result of evil conduct in body. Thus is evil conduct in speech; thus is the result of evil conduct in speech. Thus is evil conduct in thought; thus is the result of evil conduct in thought. Thus is hell, thus the realm of animals, thus is the realm of the petas (ghosts).

And this, Kesi, is the way of both the mild and the stern: ".....(as above).

But suppose, the person does not submit to your way of training, then what do you, venerable sir, do to that person?

In that case, Kesi, I kill him.

But surely the Blessed One does not deprive another of his life!

Nevertheless, the Blessed One says: "I kill him, Kesi!" It is true, Kesi, that the *Tathāgata* does not deprive another of his life, nevertheless, if the person does not submit to the training by mild ways and stern ways, and both ways, then the *Tathāgata* thinks that he needs not be spoken to and admonished by his fellow monks who are wise. It kills a man in the Ariyan Discipline, Kesi, when both the *Tathāgata* and his fellow monks think that he need not be spoken to and admonished". (*Anguttara ii. III, Sutta 111*).

#### SIX TEMPERAMENTS (*CARITAS*)

The *Vissudhimagga* or the Path of Purification Chapter three mentions six main types of temperament (*Carita*) which include many lesser ones. They are those disposed to lust, hate, infatuation, faith, intellectuality and discursiveness. As temperaments differ so do the subjects of meditation. One comes across these subjects of meditation scattered in the Pali texts (*suttas*) and the *Vissudhimagga* has collected them, and classified forty of them. They are as follows: ten objects called *Kasina* (Devices), ten objects of impurity (*Asubha*) ten recollections (*Anussati*), four sublime states (*Brahma Vihāra*) four formless spheres (*Āruppā*), one perception (*Ekā Sañña*) and one analysis (*Vavatthāna*).

As to suitability, it is said that the ten impurities and mindfulness of the body are ideally suited for one of a passionate temperament, the four sublime states and the four colour *Kasinas* are for the irritable and hateful, mindfulness on in and out breathing for the deluded and discursive, the first six recollections for the faithful, and for the intellectual the mindfulness of death, the recollection of peace, the analyses of the four primary elements and the

perception that food is repulsive. The remaining *Kasinas* and the formless *Jhanas* are suitable for all types of temperament.

## MEDICINE TO THE MIND

Though a particular type of meditation would suit a particular temperament, the Buddha being an incomparable physician and psychiatrist gives several subjects of meditation or medicine to the mind to certain individuals so that the various mental diseases (*Kilesas*) with which they are afflicted with would be radically remedied. This technique and method of prescribing several subjects of meditation to one particular individual is clearly brought out in the *Rahulavāda Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya*—a discourse which was preached to his own son, Rahula. The Buddha tells Rahula.

- 'Develop the meditation on loving kindness (*Mettā*), Rahula; for by this ill-will is banished'.
- 'Develop the meditation on compassion (*Karunā*), Rahula; for by this cruelty is banished'.
- 'Develop the meditation on sympathetic joy (*Muditā*), Rahula; for by this envy or jealousy is banished'.
- 'Develop the meditation on equanimity (*Upekkhā*), Rahula; for by this aversion is banished'.
- 'Develop the meditation on impurity (*Asubha*), Rahula; for by this lust is banished'.
- 'Develop the meditation on the concept of impermanence (*Anicca-Saññā*) Rahula; for by this pride of self (*Asmi-Māna*) is banished'.
- 'Develop the concentration of mindfulness on in-and-out breathing (*Ānāpānasati*), Rahula; in-and-out breathing with mindfulness, Rahula, developed and frequently practised bears much fruit, is of great advantage'.

An important fact emerges from this *sutta* and that is that it is always better for a person (*Yogāvacara*) to practise more than one type of meditation, in order that he could effectively eradicate certain deep-rooted and deep-seated diseases of the mind which continue to harass and pester him persistingly. However, he should continuously practise and specialise on one particular subject of meditation which



suits the predominant trait of his personality as enumerated earlier in the *Visudhimagga*.

In another *sutta* called the *Meghiya Sutta* (*Anguttara Nikāya* IV. 354-358) the Buddha recommends Meghiya several methods of meditation to cure various psychological defects in his personality. The elder Meghiya received permission to go for alms to a village. On his return he saw a pleasant mango grove near the river and asked the Buddha if he might go there to meditate. He was told to wait until he could find another monk (a friend) willing to go with him. But after he had repeated his request three times, he was granted permission.

Meghiya went and sat down under a mango tree to meditate; but he was surprised to find evil thoughts persistently arising in his mind. He then, returned to the Buddha and told him of his failure. The Buddha explained the reason, which was that he whose mind is not yet sufficiently trained to gain release, requires five things at the outset which will lead to the preparedness of the mind for understanding or according to the text "for maturing a mind immature for release". (1) Having good friends and companions to encourage and advise one, (2) Being scrupulous in observing the rules of moral behaviour. (3) Being able to listen to talk that inspires one in the practice. Perhaps today we may substitute this with reading the discourses of the Buddha and life stories of the famous disciples, (4) Being firmly resolved to make a continuous effort in getting rid of bad, unwholesome states and cultivating good states, (5) Developing wisdom and discrimination by observing how everything in this world arises only to pass away again, is conditioned and impermanent.

### DISEASES OF THE MIND

The Buddha after instructing him in this manner advised Meghiya to practise four more things, four hints we might say for overcoming four specific negative states or diseases of the mind. They are as follows: (1) The contemplating of the non-beautiful (*Asubha*); unpleasant nature of the body by mentally dissecting it into its various component parts and organs and also its functions such as digestion

and excretion. It is for overcoming excessive attachment and love of one's own body and the bodies of others, and gives freedom from worry and concern about the body.

It is a meditation that is often evaded by numerous western Buddhists "as not quite nice". In fact some modern commentators have dismissed it as unsuited to this day and age. This attitude is but a cowardly escape from realism. The meditation on the impurities of the body is useful because it makes us realise more fully not only the impermanence of our body but also its worthlessness as compounds of perishable matter. This meditation in particular also enables us to understand the doctrine of impersonality which inevitably leads to greater detachment, balance of mind and stability, which are vitally necessary in this age of stress and storm.

(2) The impartial development of an attitude of friendliness (*Mettā*) or kindness, sympathy and identification with others, which overcomes anger, illwill and annoyance and leads to a happy, contented and tolerant state of the mind. The person who meditates on loving-kindness which is one of the four divine states (*Brahma Viharā*) experiences peace, happiness and contentment.

(3) Mindfulness of breathing, the awareness of the breath entering and leaving the body by the sense of touch at the nostrils, which overcomes the turmoil of excessive and distracting discursive thoughts. The mind is then able to be controlled and concentrated and to be used more effectively. This meditation is of the highest and paramount importance in Buddhism, its reputation being enhanced by the tradition of it being the main practice of the Buddha himself.

(4) Developing the idea of the impermanence of everything, that is called oneself, which makes a direct onslaught on egotism and pride which are deep-seated and deep-rooted

in the minds of ordinary worldlings, and thereby one understands that all phenomena are empty, void and without a permanent core or entity.

## FIVE CONTEMPLATIONS

In another discourse in the *Anguttara Nikāya* the Buddha gives five contemplations which are suitable to all whatever their temperaments may be. These subjects of meditation are infallible remedies for the five common ailments that humanity in general, are afflicted with. The Buddha says that these five contemplations should be frequently contemplated by laymen as well as by monks. They are as follows:

1. Old age will come; I have not outstripped old age.
2. Disease will come; I have not outstripped disease.
3. Death will come; I have not outstripped death.  
(These three overcome the "three prides" (Mada) of youth, health and life respectively, causing people to do evil deeds).
4. All things near and dear to me are subject to alteration, subject to separation.
5. I am the result of my own deeds; whatever deed I do, skilled or unskilled, good or bad, I shall become an heir to it.  
(This overcomes wrong acts of body, speech and thought)

The ideas of impermanence, suffering and not-self are at the heart of the Four Noble Truths and foster the experience of Nibbāna. As the Buddha says to Meghiya; "By perceiving impermanence. Meghiya, the perception of what is not-self is established. Perceiving this truth leads to the uprooting of the Conceit of "I and one realises Nibbāna in this life".

In fact the body, feelings, perceptions, mental activities and mind are actually impermanent and impersonal give rise to a state of discontent and despair and so we experience suffering because we crave to exist and experience the things of the world under the illusion that they are

really permanent and belong to us for ever. This disparity between reality and our wrong views and longings concerning it is what is termed suffering.

If there is no craving, there would be no suffering. When this is clearly seen it is called Right View, the first step on the Eightfold Path. According to our view, we think, speak, act and live (steps 2-5): all our efforts to purify and rid our minds of suffering and the practice of mindfulness and meditation (steps 6-8) are directed by Right View and lead towards the cessation of all suffering. Being a Psychiatrist par-excellence the Buddha was able to comprehend the extent to which a person has developed his spiritual powers. If his spiritual faculties has not been harmoniously cultivated he instructed with very striking practical examples drawn from everyday life the method of achieving his goal. This is well illustrated in the story of the Venerable Sona-Kolivisa, who was making a violent but unsuccessful effort to exert himself physically and mentally. Then the following thought occurred to him while in solitude: "The disciples of the Blessed One, live with zealous effort and I am one of them. Yet my mind is not free of taints. My family has wealth; I can enjoy my riches and do good; what if I were to give up the training and revert to the material life, enjoy the riches of the world and do good?"

### SIMILE OF THE LUTE

The Blessed One reading his thoughts approached him and asked:

Sona, did you not think: "The disciples of the Blessed One live with zealous effort.....(as before).....and do good?"

Yes, venerable sir,

And what do you think, Sona, were you not skilful at the lute before, when you were a layman?

Yes, venerable sir,

And what do you think, Sona, when the strings of your lute were over strung was it then in tune and playable?

No, indeed, venerable sir,

And what do you think, Sona, when the strings of your lute were too slack was it then in tune and playable?

No, indeed, venerable sir,

But when, Sona, the strings of your lute were neither overstrung nor too slack, but keyed to the middle pitch, was it then in tune and playable?

Surely, venerable sir.

Even so, Sona, effort when too strenuous leads to flurry and when too slack to indolence. Therefore, Sona, make a firm determination thus: Understanding the equality of the faculties, I shall grasp at the aim by uniformity of effort.

Yes, venerable sir.

The venerable Sona followed the instructions of the Blessed One and in due course attained perfection and was numbered among the *Arahats*. (Vinaya Texts ii. I ff; Anguttara iii. 374-5 Sutta 55).

### BALANCED PERSONALITY

In a stimulating and encouraging discourse in the *Anguttara Nikāya* the Buddha outlined a list of defilements that should be overcome by cultivating certain powerful virtues, which would inevitably lead to sanity, serenity and a balanced personality.

".....The idea of loathsomeness (of the body) must be developed to overcome greed; all-embracing kindness, to overcome hatred; wisdom, to overcome delusion.

Good conduct in deeds, words, and thoughts must be developed to overcome bad conduct in deeds, words and thoughts.

The thought of renunciation must be developed to overcome sensual thought, the hateless thought to overcome the hateful thought, the harmless thought to overcome the cruel thought.....the idea of impermanency to overcome illusory happiness-belief, the idea of impersonality to overcome personality-belief, right views to overcome wrong views.....altruistic joy to overcome ill-humour, harmlessness to



overcome cruelty, right conduct to overcome wrong conduct  
 .....contentment to overcome discontentment..... mental  
 clarity to overcome mental confusion.....frugality to over-  
 come avarice.....mild manners to overcome rude manners,  
 good companionship to overcome bad companionship,  
 contemplation on in- and out-breathing to overcome mental  
 distraction.....mental tranquillity to overcome restlessness,  
 mental control to overcome lack of control, vigilance  
 to overcome negligence. (*Anguttara Nikāya VI. 107-16.*)

### BALANCED MIND

The cultivation of a balanced mind, a virtue which is of vital importance not only to the advanced Yogi but also to the ordinary layman, in these days of stress and strain is eloquently brought out in the *Maha-Rahulovāda Sutta* (*Majjima Nikāya 62*) thus:

“Like unto earth, Rahula, practise meditation. For, O Rahula, by practising meditation like the earth, the contacts that have arisen—agreeable and disagreeable—will not continue to obsess your mind. Just as pure and impure things, Rahula—excrement, urine, saliva, pus and blood—are cast upon the earth, and yet the earth neither abhors, nor loathes, nor dislikes such things; even so yourself Rahula, earth-wise, practise meditation. For, Rahula, by practising meditation like the earth, the contacts that have arisen—agreeable and disagreeable—will not continue to obsess your mind.

Like unto water, Rahula, practise meditation. For, O Rahula, by practising meditation water-wise, the contacts that have arisen—agreeable and disagreeable—will not continue to obsess your mind. Just as pure and impure things, Rahula—excrement, urine, saliva, pus and blood—are washed (away) in water, and yet water neither abhors, nor loathes, nor dislikes such things; even so yourself, Rahula, like water, practise meditation, and the contacts that have arisen will not continue to obsess your mind.

“Like unto fire, Rahula, practise meditation. For, O Rahula, by practising meditation fire-wise, the contacts that have arisen—agreeable and disagreeable—will not

continue to obsess your mind. Just as fire, Rahula, burns pure and impure things—excrement, urine, saliva, pus and blood—and yet fire neither abhors, nor loathes, nor dislikes such things; even so yourself, Rahula, like fire, practise meditation, and the contacts that have arisen will not continue to obsess your mind.

“Like unto air, Rahula, practise meditation. For, O Rahula, by practising meditation air-wise, the contacts that have arisen—agreeable and disagreeable—will not continue to obsess your mind. Just as air, Rahula, blows upon pure and impure things—excrement, urine, saliva, pus and blood—and yet air neither abhors, nor loathes, nor dislikes such things; even so yourself, Rahula, like air, practise meditation, and the contacts that have arisen will not continue to obsess your mind.

“Like unto space, Rahula, practise meditation. For, O Rahula, by practising meditation space-wise, the contacts that have arisen—agreeable and disagreeable—will not continue to obsess your mind. Just as the vault of the skies above, Rahula, is not attached to any place; even so yourself, Rahula, like the vault of the skies above, practise meditation. For, Rahula, by practising meditation like space, the contacts that have arisen—agreeable and disagreeable—will not continue to obsess your mind”.

## VAP POYA

The Poya day of *Vap*, which falls in October, marks the following significant events:

(1) The momentous event of the conclusion of the Buddha's preaching of the *Abhidhamma* for three months to his mother in the *Deva Loka* (Heavenly realm).

(2) The recital of the *Vinaya Pitaka* was held for the first time in Ceylon at Thūpārāma presided over by venerable Arahāt Maha Arittha.

(3) The Buddha aspirant (*Bodhisatta*) Metteyya who will appear on earth as a Buddha in this aeon (*Kalpa*) was born as a human being in the dispensation of Gotama Buddha. He entered the Order of *Bhikkhus* after listening to an inspiring discussion on the *Abhidhamma* between the Buddha and the great Thera Sāriputta.

(4) On the instructions of Arahāt Mahinda Thera, King Devānampiyatissa sent envoys led by Mahā Arittha to request Emperor Asoka to send his daughter Arahāt Sanghamittā Theri to come to Ceylon to establish the *Bhikkhuni Sāsana*. (Order of Nuns)

(5) The conclusion of the early *Vas* (*Pavārana*).

### BUDDHA PREACHES ABHIDHAMMA TO THE DEVAS

In the seventh year of his Enlightenment, the Buddha during the rainy months (*Vas*) commencing from the *Esala* full-moon preached the *Abhidhamma* (the higher doctrine which deals with Buddhist philosophy) to the Devas of the Tāvātinsa Heaven led by his mother. The Blessed One out of infinite compassion preached this most abstruse and profound doctrine to the innumerable and countless *Devas* and *Brahmas* who had assembled from the ten thousand world systems with the fervent hope of making them realise the Four Noble Truths for which a knowledge of the *Abhidhamma* is absolutely necessary for it contains the ultimate facts and realities of life.

“As on all beings his pity, rolled at will  
The Sage's insight through all knowable things.  
His heart by that world-pitying love inspired,  
When, after the Twin Miracle, he dwelt  
At the high mansion of the Thirty-three,  
Throned-like the sun on Mount Yūgandhara—  
On Pandukambala, his rocky seat,  
Under the tree called Pāricchattaka,  
He by the noble insight gave discourse  
On the Abhidhamma to the spirits who came  
Led by his mother, from the myriad worlds,  
And compassed him about on every side.

(*Expositor*, Vol. I *Atthasālini*, pages 1 and 2)

It is stated in our sacred books that after listening to an elaborate dissertation on the *Abhidhamma* his mother attained the first stage of Sainthood.

The Buddha daily descended to earth from the celestial realms for the purpose of obtaining his mid-day meals and partook of the alms near Anōtattha lake in the Himālayas. During the time he was on earth the Blessed One created a perfect replica of his personality in the Deva Loka through his super-normal powers and made a resolute asseveration thus: “Let this created Buddha hold the robe, the bowl, speak and assume his appearance in such and such a way, let him preach so much of the doctrine”.

### SĀRIPUTTA MASTERS THE ABHIDHAMMA

The Venerable Sāriputta daily approached the Buddha during his sojourn on earth and the Buddha made use of this opportunity of preaching the doctrine he had expounded to the Devas to him. The Venerable Sāriputta Mahā Thera in turn repeated the *Abhidhamma* in detail beginning from the *Dhammasaṅgī* and ending in the *Mahā Patthāna* (the seven books containing the whole of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*) to his five hundred disciples. By reason of the fact that these disciples in a previous existence had the fortune of hearing the recital and rehearsal of the *Abhidhamma* by two monks and by doing such moral acts as were conducive to the acquirement of knowledge, wisdom and insight

in the rounds of rebirth, these disciples with great ease mastered the full *Abhidhamma Pitaka* and were able to recite it from beginning to the end.

Thus, at the close of the season of the rains (*Vas*) on a day like today, there were five hundred and one *Arahat bhikkhus* who had mastered the whole of the *Abhidhamma*. The Buddhist texts record that the Buddha who was well aware of the schisms and doctrinal disputes to come, adumbrated even the *Kathāvathu*—(one of the books of the *Abhidhamma*) foreseeing through his super-intellectual vision that when the hour was ripe the great *Arahat* Thera Mogalliputtatissa at Pāṭaliputta, would competently fill in the detail of that framework. To us Buddhists, therefore, the seven books of the *Abhidhamma* have come direct from the Master himself. The first two convocations merely repeated them, in addition the President of the Third Council at Patna, filled in the details of the outline of *Kathāvathu*.

## UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN THOUGHT

One of the *Abhidhamma*'s most important contributions to human thought, though still insufficiently known and utilized is the analysis and classification of consciousness undertaken in the first part of the *Dhammasangani*. Here the human mind, so evanescent and elusive, has for the first time been subjected to a comprehensive, thorough and unprejudiced scrutiny, which definitely disposes of the notion that any kind of static unity or underlying substance can be traced in the mind. However, the basic ethical lay-out and purpose of this psychology effectively prevents conclusions of ethical materialism or theoretical and practical amorality being derived from its realistic and un-metaphysical analysis of mind.

## ANALYSIS OF THE MIND

“The method of investigation applied in the *Abhidhamma* is inductive, being based exclusively on an unprejudiced and subtle introspective observation of mental processes. The procedure used in the *Dhammasangani* for the analysis of consciousness is precisely that postulated by the English



philosopher and mathematician, A. N. Whitehead: "It is impossible to over-emphasize the point that the key to the process of induction, as used either in science or in our ordinary life, is to be found in the right understanding of the immediate occasion of knowledge in its full concreteness.....In any occasion of cognition, that which is known is an actual occasion of experience, as diversified by reference to a realm of entities which transcend that immediate occasion in that they have analogous or different connections with other occasions of experience (*"Science and the Modern World"*).

Whitehead's term "occasion" corresponds to the *Abhidhammic* concept *samaya* (time, occasion, conjunction of circumstances), which occurs in all principal paragraphs of the *Dhammasaṅgani*, and there denotes the starting point of the analysis. The term receives a detailed and very instructive treatment in the *Atthasālini*, the commentary to the aforementioned work.

"The Buddha succeeded in reducing this "immediate occasion" of an act of cognition to a single moment of consciousness, which, however, in its subtlety and evanescence, cannot be observed directly and separately, by a mind untrained in introspective meditation. As the minute living beings in the microcosm of a drop of water become visible only through a microscope, so too the exceedingly short-lived processes in the world of mind become cognizable only with the help of a very subtle instrument of mental scrutiny, and that only obtains as a result of meditative training. None but the kind of introspective mindfulness or attention (*sati*) that has acquired, in meditative absorption, a high degree of inner equipoise, purity and firmness (*upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhi*), will possess the keenness, subtlety and quickness of cognitive response required for such delicate mental microscopy. Without that meditative preparation only the way of inference from comparisons between various complete or fragmentary series of thought

moments will be open as a means of research. But this approach too may yield important and reliable results, if cautious and intelligent use is made of one's own introspective results and of the psychological data of meditative experience found in *Sutta* and *Abhidhamma*.

'In the *Anupada Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 111) it is reported that the Venerable Sāriputta Thera, after rising from meditative absorption (*jhāna*) was able to analyse the respective *jhānic* consciousness into its constituent mental factors. This may be regarded as a precursor of the more detailed analysis given in the *Dhammasaṅgani*.

### QUESTIONS OF KING MILINDA

'Let us listen to a voice from Indian antiquity appreciating the difficulty of that analytical work and the greatness of its achievement. We read in the "*Questions of King Milinda*". "A difficult feat indeed was accomplished, O great King, by the Exalted One",—"Which is that difficult feat, O venerable Nāgasena?"—"The Exalted One, O king, has accomplished a difficult task when he analysed a mental process having a single object, as consisting of consciousness with its concomitants, as follows: "This is sense-impression, this is feeling, perception, volition, consciousness".—"Give an illustration of it, venerablesir"—"Suppose, O king, a man has gone to the sea by boat and takes within the hollow of his hand a little sea water and tastes it. Will this man know, "This is water from the Ganges, this water from such other rivers as Jamunā, Aciravati, etc.?"—"He can hardly do that".—"But a still more difficult task, O king, was accomplished by the Exalted One when he analysed a mental process having a single object as consisting of consciousness with its concomitants".<sup>1</sup>

### BUDDHA RAYS

The importance of the *Abhidhamma* could be gauged from the fact that when the Buddha in the fourth week after Enlightenment contemplated on the subtleties and intricacies of this doctrine, its majesty and beauty, particularly on the *Mahā Patthāna* which deals with the twenty

1. *Abhidhamma Studies* by Ven. Nyanaponika Thera pp. 6-8.

four causal relations relating to all mental and physical phenomena that he experienced ecstatic bliss and unalloyed happiness. The intensity of this serene joy and pious emotion was so overwhelming that it permeated his entire golden-hued body and the six coloured glorious rays emanated from the body downwards penetrating the earth, water and air and further blazed forth upwards like the rays of the glorious sun into the different realms of existence extending as far as the sphere of neither-perception and non-perception.

How this rare and extraordinary phenomenon took place is recorded in our books thus: The purity and the sublimity, the serenity and tranquillity of his mind generated sparkling and wholesome material qualities which left their imprint on his personality and the colour of his blood became pure, pellucid and clear and as a result rays of six colours—indigo, gold, red, white, tawny and dazzling issued from the body of the Blessed One.

### ESSENCE OF THE DOCTRINE

Now what constitutes the *Abhidhamma* and what is the essence of the doctrine He preached to the Devas? The *Abhidhamma* means the higher doctrine, because it enables one to achieve one's deliverance, after breaking the shackles and bonds of existence. As it excels and surpasses the teaching contained in the *Sutta Pitaka* and *Vinaya Pitaka* it is called *Abhidhamma*. In the *Sutta Pitaka* and the *Vinaya Pitaka* the Buddha has used conventional terms such as man, animal, being and so on. In the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, on the other hand, everything is minutely and microscopically analysed and thus the emptiness and hollowness of all mental and physical phenomena are clearly shown. Hence the Buddha is aptly called a *Vibhajjavādin*—the teacher of a doctrine of analysis. Thus chiefly of the profundity of the doctrine or because it is conducive to one's deliverance and owing to the excellent analytical method of treatment, it is called *Abhidhamma*.

The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* consists of seven treatises—*Dhammasaṅgani* (Classification of *Dhamma*); *Vibhanga* (Divisions); *Dhātukathā* (Discourse on Elements); *Puggala*

*Paññatti* (The Book on individuals); *Kathāvatthu* (Points of Controversy); *Yamaka* (The Book of Pairs) and *Paṭṭhāna* (The Book of Causal Relations).

The crux and quintessence of the teachings preached to the Devas could be summed up as follows: An exposition on the different permutations and combinations of thoughts, chiefly from an ethical standpoint were enumerated. The composition of each type of consciousness is set forth in detail. How thoughts arise are minutely described. Matter is summarily described. The nature of *Nibbāna* is defined. Therefore the Blessed One preached the one and only thing that matters, which is to know and understand the mind or consciousness, its close associates, corporeality, the mental and physical bases, which provide sensuous stimulants, and finally the process involved in the utter purification of mind leading to *Nibbāna*—the cherished goal of Buddhists.

I cannot but do better than quote the words of Mrs. Rhys Davids, the eminent scholar and writer on Buddhism who succinctly, yet aptly says that the *Abhidhamma* deals with what we find (a) within us, (b) around us, (c) what we aspire to find.

The *Abhidhamma* thus helps us to have a clear comprehension and a better understanding of what constitutes man and his destiny. The three salient characteristics of sentient existence, namely, the impermanence, sorrow and soulessness, are an indispensable condition for the realisation of *Nibbāna*. Therefore the *Abhidhamma* is of the greatest importance for the understanding of these vital truths.

### ANALYSIS OF THE HUMAN PERSONALITY

According to the *Abhidhamma* the so called individual existence is in reality nothing but a mere process of mental and physical phenomena. This process since time immemorial had been going on, and after the so-called death, will also still continue for unthinkably long periods of time. These five groups, however, neither singly, nor collectively constitute any self-dependent real Egoentity, or Persona-



lity (*attā*), nor is there to be found any such entity apart from them. Hence the belief in such an Ego-entity or Personality, as real in the ultimate sense, proves a mere illusion.

“When all constituent parts are there,  
The designation “cart” is used;  
Just so, where the five groups exist,  
Of “living being” do we speak”.

(*Samyutta Nikāya*, Verse 10).

‘The fact ought to be emphasised here that these five groups, correctly speaking, merely form an abstract classification by the Buddha, but that they as such, i.e. as just these five complete groups; have no real existence, since apart from corporeality and a number of mental formations, only single representatives of these groups can arise with any state of consciousness. For example, with one and the same unit of consciousness only one single kind of feeling, say of joy or sorrow, can be associated, and never more than one. Similarly two different perceptions cannot arise at the same moment. Also, of the various kinds of sense-cognition or consciousness, only one single one can be present at a time; for example seeing, hearing or inner consciousness etc. Of the fifty mental formations, however, a smaller or larger number are always associated with every state of consciousness.

Due to a lack of understanding the five *Khandhas* are often conceived as too compact, too substantial, so to speak, as more or less permanent entities, whereas in reality, as already stated, they, as such never exist; and even their representatives have only an evanescent existence. Feeling, perception and mental formations, e.g. form merely the various aspects of those single units of consciousness which like lightning, flash forth at every moment and immediately thereafter disappear again. They are to consciousness what redness, softness, sweetness, etc. are to the apple, and have no more reality than these things.<sup>1</sup>

1. Buddhist Dictionary by Ven. Nyanatiloka p. 77.



The study of the *Abhidhamma* helps one to have a clear understanding and comprehension of the two fundamental doctrines of the Buddha, namely the doctrine of conditionality (*Patīccasamuppāda*) of all physical and psychical phenomena and the doctrine of impersonality (*Anattā*). These two important doctrines of Buddhism are unique and not found in any other religious and philosophical system and therefore form the indispensable condition for the real understanding and realisation of the teachings of the Buddha.

### DOCTRINE OF ANATTA

‘It is on this very doctrine of Non-Self (*anattā*) that all *Abhidhamma* thought converges and this is where it culminates. The elaborate and thorough treatment of *Anattā* is also the most important practical contribution of the *Abhidhamma* to the progress of the Buddha’s disciple towards liberation. The *Abhidhamma* provides him with ample material for his meditations in the field of insight (*vipassanā*), concerning Impermanence and Impersonality, and this material has been analysed down to the subtlest point and is couched in strictly philosophical language.

‘There will certainly be many to whom the degree of analytical details found in the *Suttas* will be quite enough for them to understand *Anattā*, and sufficient for their use in meditative practice. But there are also minds that require repeated and varied demonstration and illustration of a truth before they are entirely satisfied and convinced. There are also others who wish to push their analysis to the greatest detail possible and to extend it to the very smallest unit accessible, in order to make quite sure that even the realm of the infinitesimal, of the material and psychical “atoms”, does not hide any self or abiding substance. To such minds the *Abhidhamma* will be of great value. But also those who, in general, are satisfied with the expositions in the *Suttas*, may sometimes wish to investigate more closely a particular point that has roused their interest or presents difficulties. To them too the *Abhidhamma* will prove helpful.

'Besides helping such individual cases, the *Abhidhamma* will in general render valuable aid in the slow and difficult change of thought and outlook from the view-point of "self" to that of "non-self". Having once grasped intellectually the doctrine of non-self, one can certainly succeed in applying it to theoretical and practical issues if only one remembers it in time and deliberately directs one's thoughts and volitions accordingly. But except for such deliberate directing of thought, which in most cases will be relatively rare, the mind will continue to move in the old-accustomed ruts of "I" and "mine", "self" and "Substance", which are deeply ingrained in our daily language and our modes of thinking and our actions too will still continue to be frequently governed by our ancient egocentric impulses. An occasional intellectual assent to the true outlook of *Anattā* will not effect great changes in that situation. The only remedy is for bad or wrong habits of action, speech and thinking to be gradually replaced by good and correct habits until the latter become as spontaneous as the former are now. It is therefore necessary that right thinking, that is, thinking in terms of *Anattā*, is made the subject of regular and systematic mental training until the power of wrong habits of thought is reduced and finally broken. The *Abhidhamma* in general, and in particular the various Triads and Dyads of terms as listed in the *Mātikā* or "Schedule", of the *Abhidhamma Pitakā*, provide ample material for such "fluency exercises" of right thinking. Familiarity with the application of the "impersonal" view-point of the *Abhidhamma* and with the terminology by which it is expressed will exercise a considerable formative influence on the mind'.<sup>1</sup>

The *Patīccasamuppāda* shows the conditionality and the dependent nature of that uninterrupted flux of manifold physical and psychological phenomena of existence, conventionally called "the Ego, or Man, or Animal, etc.". Whereas the doctrine of Impersonality, or *Anattā*, proceeds analytically, by splitting existence up into the ultimate constituent parts, into mere empty, unsubstantial phenomena or elements, the doctrine of Dependent Origination, on the

x. *Abhidhamma Studies* by Ven. Nyanaponika Thera, pp. 9-10.

other hand, proceeds synthetically, showing that all these phenomena are, in some way or other, conditionally related with each other.

## TWO IMPORTANT DOCTRINES

In fact, the entire *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, as a whole, treats only about these two doctrines: Phenomenality, implying impersonality, and Conditionality of all existence. The former or analytical method is applied in *Dhammasangani*, the first book of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, the latter or synthetical method, in *Patthāna*, the last book of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*.

The person who has not penetrated the impersonality and conditionality of all existence, and does not comprehend that in reality there exists only this continually self-consuming process of arising and passing away of bodily and mental phenomena, and that there is no separate Ego-entity within or without this process, he will not be able to understand Buddhism, i.e. the teaching of the Four Noble Truths (*Sacca*) in the right light. He will think that it is his Ego, his personality, that experiences the suffering, his personality that performs good and evil actions and will be reborn according to these actions, his personality that will enter into *Nirvāna*, his personality that walks on the Eightfold Path. Thus it is said in the *Visuddhimagga*:

“Mere suffering exists, no sufferer is found;  
The deeds are, but no doer of the deeds is there;  
Nirvana is, but not the man that enters it;  
The Path is, but no traveller on it is seen”.

(Chapter XVI)

“Whosoever is not clear with regard to the conditionally arisen phenomena, and does not comprehend that all the actions are conditioned through ignorance, etc. he thinks that it is an Ego that understands or does not understand, that acts or causes to act, that comes to existence at rebirth—that has the sense-

impression, that feels, desires, becomes attached continues and rebirth again enters a new existence".

(*Visuddhimagga Chapter XVII*),

### ABHIDHAMMA IN CEYLON

It is noteworthy how, in Ceylon, our scholarly Kings revered these works. Again and again the *Mahāvamsa* records how kings loved to hear the *Abhidhamma*, and some even preached it themselves. Kassapa V (929 A.C.) had the whole of the *Abhidhamma* engraved upon gold plates, with the first book, the *Dhammasangani* specially studded with jewels. He housed this work in a glorious temple and led a magnificent procession thither. In 1066, when the Norman Duke, William the Conqueror, was ravaging Saxon England, our own King Vijaya Bahu, scholar, poet and "chief of Sinhala bards", secluding himself every morning, was studying the *Abhidhamma* and making a Sinhala translation from the Pali *Dhammasangani*.

### FIRST VINAYA RECITAL

For the first time in the history of Ceylon, a convocation of sixty eight Maha theras each having a following of thousand monks was held at Thuparama to rehearse the *Vinaya Pitaka* under the distinguished chairmanship of *Arahat Maha Arittha*. This was done at the behest of *Arahat Maha Mahinda*. King Devānampiyatissa having performed various meritorious acts, for the progress, propagation and establishment of the *Buddha Sāsana*, asked Mahinda whether the *Sāsana* was established in the Island. The great Thera replied thus:

"Great King, the *Sāsana* is established but it has not taken root". Being questioned further as to when and how it would take root, Mahinda explained—

"When a person born of parents who belong to Tambapannidipa, enters Pabbajja in Tambapannidipa, learns the *Vinaya* in Tambapannidipa, and recites the same in Tambapannidipa, then will the *Sāsana* take root in the land". The *bhikkhu*, Maha-Arittha, possessed all these qualifications and arrangements were promptly made for a recital of the *Vinaya*. A pavilion was erected on the spot where the parivena of the minister Meghavannabhaya stood.



The description is modelled on that of the first council held at Rajagaha. Sixty-eight mahatheras, each having a following of thousand *bhikkhus* assembled at Thūpārāma. A basic difference, however, should be noted between this council and the one at Rajagaha. The latter was assembled to codify and arrange the *Vinaya* and the *Dhamma*, whereas the object of the Thūpārāma Council was the teaching of *Vinaya* by a Sinhalese *bhikkhu*. Thus Maha-Arittha assumed the role of a *Vinaya* teacher and five hundred *bhikkhus* with Mattabhaya therā, a younger brother of the king, received the teaching. The king, too, with his retinue (*sarājikā ca parisā*) was present at the recital, a feature which was absent in the first Council. It is interesting to note that *Arahat* Maha Arittha played somewhat the same role as Upali did in the first Council at Rajagaha.

The *sāsana* was thus firmly established and well-rooted in the island. Following the lead given by members of the royal family thousands entered the Order. Mahinda, needless to say, well deserved the epithet often applied to him, "*Dīpappasāḍako*" (he who made the island bright). About seven hundred years later the compiler of the Pali Commentary on the *Itivuttaka* records that even up to his day those who joined the Order did so following the footsteps of Maha-Mahinda therā.

### WOMEN ENTER THE ORDER

The successful missionary efforts in the establishment and propagation of the sublime teachings of the Buddha in Lanka by Maha Arahat Mahinda led to several hundreds of women headed by the king's sister-in-law, Anula, who had already become a *Sotāpanna* expressing a desire of joining the Order of Buddhist nuns. As *Arahat* Mahinda could not confer *Pabbajjā* (Ordination) on them according to the *Vinaya Rules*, he instructed King Devānampiyatissa to send a message to his sister Sanghamittā Arahat Theri to come to Ceylon and establish the *Bhikkhuni Sāsana* for the weal and welfare of womenkind. The task of conveying the message fell to Minister Arittha and his party. He was also asked to bring a branch of the Sacred Bodhi Tree under which the Buddha attained Supreme Enlightenment which noble task devolved on the Great Theri Sanghamittā.



## IL POYA

The *Il Poya* which falls on the full-moon day in the month of November commemorates the following significant events in the dispensation of the Buddha:

1. The Buddha-aspirant, Metteyya, who will appear on earth in the future as the fifth Buddha of this aeon (*Kalpa*) obtains the assurance (*Vivaraṇa*) from Gotama Buddha that he would be a Buddha.
2. The despatch of the first sixty Arahats by the Buddha—the first messengers of Truth (*Dhammadūta*) to teach his Dhamma to all without distinction.
3. The Buddha arrives at Uruvela with the main purpose of converting the three Kassapa brothers and their thousand followers.
4. The conclusion of the three months retreat (*Vas*) of the monks which began in August and the offering of *Kathina*—a special robe to the assembly of monks.
5. The attainment of the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha's chief disciple, Sāriputta Maha Thera.

The despatch of the first sixty Arahāt disciples of the Buddha is an epoch-making and momentous event in the dispensation of the Buddha as it led to the propagation of the *Dhamma* and brought in its train, peace, happiness and serenity and eventually the peace of *Nibbāna* to a countless number of beings all over the world. The benign and sublime message of the Buddha yet continues to exercise its profound influence on the lives and destinies of beings even after two thousand five hundred years, with its original force and freshness as it was proclaimed by the Buddha to the first five disciples at Benares over two thousand five hundred years ago.

### MESSENGERS OF TRUTH (DHAMMADŪTAS)

The Buddha was thus the first religious teacher in the history of mankind to send perfectly enlightened ordained disciples to propagate the doctrine out of compassion, for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, for

the good, benefit and nappiness of gods and men. This is unique as the Buddha did not use dubious and questionable methods in the propagation of his teachings but it spread through its own intrinsic merits, appealing to the reasoning faculties of man rather than his emotions.

The history of Buddhism has thus never been sullied by holy wars, by any inquisitions or persecutions. A man's sole right, which to the Buddhists is also a duty, is to make known to all, to the best of his ability, the knowledge of the Path which the Buddha declared to be the way to Enlightenment and which he himself, so far as he has trodden that Path has found to be true and effective. The *Dhamma* or Truth is a gift, greater, according to the Buddha, than all other gifts, but yet it is a gift to be offered with kindness and compassion, so that it may be accepted or rejected.

Aldous Huxley writes: "Alone of all the great world religions, Buddhism makes its way without persecution, censorship or inquisitions". Lord Russell remarks: "Of the great religions of history, I prefer Buddhism, specially in its earliest forms; because it has had the smallest element of persecution". In the name of Buddhism no altar was reddened with the blood of a Hypatia, no Bruno was burnt alive. There lies the greatness and nobility of Buddhism and verily it has stood the test of time and it appeals even to this day to scientific and rational minds.

It is significant to note that the Order of Monks founded by the Buddha "was democratic in constitution and communistic in distribution". The original members were drawn from the highest status of society and were all educated and rich men, but the Order was open to all worthy ones, irrespective of caste, class or rank. Both young and old, belonging to all the castes, were freely admitted into the Order and lived like brothers of the same family without any distinction. This noble Order of *Bhikkhus*, which stands to this day, is the oldest historic body of celibates in the world.

After keeping retreat (*Vas*), the three months seclusion during the rains, the Buddha returned to Uruvela, and on the way found a party of thirty wealthy young men, who

had been sporting with their wives in a grove. One of them, had no wife, and for him they had taken a courtesan, but while they were not noticing she had taken their things and fled. They came seeking her, and inquired of the Buddha whether he had seen a woman.

### DISCOURSE ON "ALL FLAMES"

"What do you think young men", said the Buddha, "Which is better for you to go in search of a woman or to go in search of yourselves?" "It is better Lord for us to go in search of ourselves". The Buddha then told them to sit down and preaching to them, converted them and ordained them. Thereafter he proceeded to Uruvela to the abodes of the three Kassapa brothers and converted them by preaching the *Āditta-Pariyāya Sutta*—Discourse on "All in Flames" which gives in a nutshell the quintessence of the Buddha's teachings leading to final emancipation from the ills and woes of life. The essence of this discourse is as follows:

All in flames, O Bhikkhus ! What, O Bhikkhus, is all in flames ?

Eye is in flames. Forms are in flames. Eye-consciousness is in flames. Eye-contact is in flames. Feeling which is pleasurable or painful, or neither pleasurable nor painful, arising from eye-contact is in flames. By what is it kindled? By the flames of lust, hatred, ignorance, birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair is it kindled I declare.

Reflecting thus, O Bhikkhus the learned Ariyan disciple gets disgusted with the eye, the forms, the eye-consciousness, the eye-contact, whatsoever feeling—pleasurable, painful or neither pleasurable nor painful—that arises from contact with the eye. He gets disgusted with the ear, sounds, nose, odours, tongue, tastes, body, contact, mind, mental objects, mind-consciousness, mind contacts, whatsoever feeling—pleasurable, painful or neither pleasurable nor painful—that arises from contact with the mind. With disgust he gets detached; with detachment he is delivered.

He understands that birth is ended, lived the Holy Life, done what should be done, and that there is no more of this state again. (*Mahāvagga I, 21 a summary of the version by Warren, Buddhism in Translations p. 351*).

## FIVE PRACTICAL METHODS

Lust, hatred and the other scorching fires are entirely destroyed by watching the mind and by the practice of *Samatha*—Meditation (Tranquillity), and *Vipassanā*—Meditation (Insight). A wandering mind lies in the fangs of the passions. The Buddha has given five practical and useful methods in overcoming the defilements of the mind and thereby developing the Higher Mind which eventually leads to the deathless state of Nibbana. They are as follows:

If unskilled thoughts born of desire, aversion and delusion were to arise in the mind about some object the monk should divert his attention to some other object associated with thoughts devoid of such pollutions, just as, "a skilled carpenter or a carpenter's apprentice might knock out, drive out, draw out a large peg with a small peg". Thus "the mind subjectively steadies, calms, is one-pointed, concentrated". If while diverting the thoughts to such an object there still arises evil thoughts, then "the peril of these thoughts should be scrutinised, thinking, 'Indeed, these are unskilled thoughts; indeed, these are thoughts that have errors; indeed, these are thoughts that have painful results, just as a woman or a man in the prime of life fond of adornment, if the carcase of a snake or a dog or a human being were hanging round his neck would be disgusted, repelled and ashamed.

If while scrutinising the perils of such thoughts, there still arises evil unskilled thoughts that monk should bring about forgetfulness and lack of attention to those thoughts, like a man with vision who might not like to see the objects that come within his range of vision, would close his eyes or look another way. Or he should direct his attention to stopping the cause of these thoughts, just as a man walking fast,



on thinking, 'Why do I walk fast?' were to walk slow. It might occur to him as he is walking slowly, 'Now why do I walk slowly? Suppose I were to stand?' It might occur to him as he was standing, 'Now why do I stand? Suppose I were to sit down?' It might occur to him as he was sitting down, 'Now why do I sit down? Suppose I were to lie down?' even so having abandoned the hardest posture, might take to the easiest posture itself'.

If there still exist evil states of mind "the monk should, with his teeth clenched, his tongue pressed against his palate, by his mind subdue, restrain, dominate the mind; even as a strong man having taken hold of a weaker man by the head or shoulders, might subdue, restrain and dominate him". (*Majjhima Nikāya—Discourse No. 19*).

### PURIFICATION OF MIND

It is in the fitness of things that the Buddha has laid much emphasis on the purification of the mind, for deliverance according to Buddhism is through no other method but mental development. All our mighty efforts, all that lofty morality we practise are for one mighty purpose—attainment of concentration and Enlightenment. And one who has acquired such capacity to shut out the evil states of mind and saturate his mind with wholesome thoughts is truly called "A master in the methods and Path of Thought". In the words of the Buddha: "He can think whatever thought he wishes; he will not think any thought that he does not wish; he has cut away that he does not wish; he has cut away craving; done away with the fetters, and by fully mastering pride, has made an end of sorrow".

### SIGNIFICANCE OF PAVĀRANA

The most imposing as well as the most important ceremony which brings to a successful termination the three-month seclusion of monks for the rainy season is called *Pavāraṇa*. All the monks of the *āvāsa* who observed the retreat (*vassāvāsa*) participate in this ceremony; which is invariably preceded by the Upōsatha Kamma. The monks



assemble in the *Simāge* (where a *Simāge* is not found, a temporary structure is put up according to the requirements of the *Vinaya*) of the *āvāsa* to confess all lapses of moral conduct of both omission and commission (seen, heard or apprehended), that might have been committed during the *Vassāvāsa*.

Monks who have violated the greater or the lesser *Pātimokkha* rules confess their transgressions individually and seek absolution. The absolution is administered with a mild reproof (*Pātikossana*). Monks who have not violated any of the disciplinary rules also have to declare their Purity of conduct (*Pārisuddhi*). In this manner the whole assembly of monks establish their *Pārisuddhi*.

The *Vinaya* is explicitly clear on the point that the recitation of the *Pātimokkha* shall not be proceeded with unless the monks have previously declared their *Pārisuddhi*. In the *Culavagga* it is clearly stated that the recitation of the *Pātimokkha* should be interdicted if there are any impure *Bhikkhus* in the assembly. The interdiction also applies to monks who have obstinately refused to acknowledge their guilt. The same interdictory procedure holds good for the *Pavāraṇa* ceremony as well.

We are now able to understand that the *Pavāraṇa* is of vital importance to the *Bhikkhus* who were in seclusion during the rainy season. They have individually declared their shortcomings before their brethren hiding nothing. If they did hide anything it will rebound on them like a boomerang. The *Vinaya* rules are not punitive, they are meant to rehabilitate an erring monk and make him a good monk. In the words of the Blessed One—"Let there be no falling back from the goal of recluseship, while there is something further to be done". (*Majjhima* 1-271).

### THE GLORY OF THE SĀSANA

The glory and the longevity of the *Buddha Sāsana* rest on the *Pārisuddhi* of the *Sangha*.

The monk, who delights in his *Pārisuddhi*, who guards his *Pārisuddhi* even at the risk of his life, who seeks not the faults of others, who is ever mindful of his faults, leads

the even tenor of his life in accordance with the *Vinaya*, the life-blood of the Buddha-*Sāsana*.

I now come to the ceremony, the finale of the *Vassāvāsa*. I use the word ceremony in the sense of reverence and not as a rite. The *Bhikkhus* who have thus established their *Pārisuddhi* are certainly worthy of our reverence, worthy of receiving our gifts, for that which is given to them yield abundant fruit. It should also be noted that the lay-devotees get such an opportunity only once a year to bestow their tangible respect in some sort of offering, within each one's means. Whatever is offered to the *Bhikkhu-Sangha* on this occasion is considered, in point of merit, productive of the highest good.

### KATINA CEREMONY

This tangible expression of the respect of the gratitude of the lay-devotees of the *āvāsa* or the *vihāre* towards the *Bhikkhus* who had gone into the Retreat at the invitation of the lay-devotees is usually shown by a gift of cloth to be sewn into robes which is called *Kathina-chivara*. The ceremony is called the *Kathina-pinkama*.

Now what were the reasons which led to the offering of this special robe? A certain group of monks after observing the three months' retreat were proceeding to the monastery of the Blessed One at *Sāvatthi*. They were thoroughly drenched by a heavy downpour of rain. By the time they arrived at the monastery where the Buddha dwelt, their robes were soaked to the skin and were weary and tired. Considering the conditions in which these monks were placed, the Buddha addressed the monks thus:

"I prescribe, O monks, that the *Kathina* ceremony shall be performed by monks when they have completed their *Vas*. And five things are allowable to you, O Monks, after the *Kathina* ceremony has been held—going for alms to the houses of people who have not invited you, going for alms without wearing the usual set of three robes, going for alms in a body of four or more, possessing as many robes as are wanted, and whatever number of robes shall

have come to hand, that shall belong to them". (That is, to the monks entitled by residence and otherwise to share in the distribution)—(*Vinaya Pitaka*).

It is the time-honoured custom in our country to inform the lay-devotees of the day on which the *Kathina* ceremony is held and, also, to contribute money (within their means) to buy the cloth and other requisites. The practice today for a particular lay-devotee to buy the cloth for the *Kathina-Chivara* is certainly to be deplored and thereby depriving others of participating in kind towards this most meritorious deed. It is unfortunate that this single donor is unable to understand the emphasis he (or she) places on the self or the I.

## PROCEDURE

I shall attempt briefly to set forth the procedure as prescribed in the *Vinaya*. It is the *Sangha* who decides whether a *Kathina* ceremony is desirable or not. If it is desirable, then the *Sangha* should meet and a *Bhikkhu* should move a resolution to the effect that the need for a *Kathina* has arisen; it must, then, be passed unanimously. At the same time by a formal announcement a *Bhikkhu* is elected to receive the gift of cloth for the making of robes.

The gift of pure white cloth is brought to the *āvāsā* early in the morning of the day the *Kathina* falls. After certain formalities are over the *Sangha* takes charge of the cloth which in turn is handed over to the monk whom the *Sangha* elected to conduct the stitching of the robes. He could obtain the assistance of other monks. The monks who are taking part in the sewing of the robes are given knives with handles, needles, thimbles, thread, measuring sticks and other apparatus necessary for the task.

The cloth is then cut to the required lengths and stitched in conformity with the *Vinaya* rules. The tailored robes are washed, dyed and dried in the sun. All this has to be done on one day. The robes are now ready for distribution among the *Sangha*.

In the distribution of the robes which is entirely a matter for the *Sangha* the senior resident *Bhikkhu* is entitled to a share of the robes. Any *Bhikkhu*, who happened to be outside the pale of the *āvāsa* and who has no intention of coming back, is not entitled to a share of the robes. A *bhikkhu*, who had the intention of coming back, but did not turn up on the day of the *Kathina*, forfeited his right to the share of the robes.

At evening fall, the resident *Bhikkhu* or one of his deputies wears the *Kathina-robe* and ascends the pulpit. He takes the prepared seat and delivers a sermon dwelling on the importance of the *Kathina-ceremony* and concludes the sermon with a thanks-giving to all the lay-devotees, an offering of merit to the devas as well as those who are dead. Thus falls the curtain of the *Kathina-ceremony* of the year.

### BENEFITS OF KATHINA

One great advantage of the *Kathina-ceremony* is that it brings together the *bhikkhus* and the lay-devotees. The *bhikkhus* receive from the laity the requisites of the monk life which are necessary for their physical well-being, and at the same time, promote their spiritual progress on the path to deliverance. The *bhikkhus* reciprocate the liberality of the laity by providing the latter with spiritual nutriment for their well-being here and hereafter. This mutual interdependency of the *Sangha* and laity is essential for the strength, the unity, the solidarity and the longevity of the *Buddha-Sāsana*.

There is today much unhealthy criticism in regard to the *Bhikkhu-Sangha* in general. The *Kathina-ceremony* is a powerful force to outlaw this criticism for the *Kathina*, besides being the most merit producing event of the year, it is a never-failing reminder to the *Sangha* to live within the framework of the *Vinaya*. In short, "the *Kathina-ceremony* helps to make a *bhikkhu* a good *bhikkhu*, and a layman, a good layman.



Wherefore, says the Blessed One at verse 379 of the *Dhammapāda*:

“Oh Bhikkhus, find out your short-comings by yourselves, and blame yourselves (if there are any); judge for yourselves whether what you are doing is right; thus self-protected and mindful, you will live happily”

### VENERABLE SĀRIPUTTA THERA'S WISDOM

The Venerable Sāriputta Thera was the chief amongst the disciples of the Buddha in Wisdom and he was also known as the General of the *Dhamma* (*Dhammasenāpathi*). Before the attainment of *Parinibbāna* he repaid a debt of gratitude to his mother by converting her to the Buddhist faith and establishing her in the first stage of sainthood. The intellectual genius and spiritual stature of this great Thera is borne out most eloquently in some of the discourses delivered by him which are found in the *Sutta Pitakas*. Discourses like *Sammāditthi Sutta* No. 9 of *Majjhima Nikāya*, *Sacca-Vibbanga Sutta* (analysis of the Four Noble Truths) of the *Majjhima Nikāya* No. 141, the greater Discourse of the *Elephant's footprint* No. 28 of the *Majjhima Nikāya* and the *Mahāvedalla Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* No. 43, which deal with some of the most abstruse and intricate aspects of Buddhist philosophy.

The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* which contains the psychology of Buddhism was first preached by the Buddha to the Devas in the celestial realms. He then taught it to the Venerable Sāriputta Thera during his sojourn on earth. The Venerable Sāriputta in turn repeated the *Abhidhamma* in detail to human beings, for the Buddha was fully aware that the Venerable Sāriputta was equal to the task. He is also the author of both the *Niddesa* and the *Paṭisambhida-Magga* of the *Sutta Pitaka* which deal with the abstruse teachings of the Buddha and shows beyond doubt the profundity and the depth of his mind.

Concerning the Venerable Sāriputta's mastery of [the *Dhamma*, and its exposition, the Buddha had this to say: “The Essence of *Dhamma* (*Dhammadūta*) has been so well penetrated by Sāriputta, O Monks, that if I were to ques-



tion him therein for one day in different words and phrases, Sāriputta would reply likewise for one day in various words and phrases. And if I were to question him for one night or a day and a night or for two days and nights, even up to seven days and nights, Sāriputta would expound the matter for the same period of time, in various words and phrases". (*Nidāna Samyutta*).

### SĀRIPUTTA'S SIMPLICITY AND HUMILITY

To match his stupendous intellect and unrivalled knowledge, he possessed a delightful simplicity of character which was a shining example to other members of the Order. The texts eloquently bear out this fact—"He was most humble of heart, even as one of the scavenger class. He thought of himself as a doormat which all men may trample upon. He was like water, hating none, purifying all. Just as the wind blows on all, he lived with a heart full of boundless compassion. He was selfless. He was grateful. He was a comforter of the suffering and the destitute. He made sad eyes smile. He was a friend of all. He was like a mother unto all". These are the very words of the Enlightened One in a very important discourse—the *Sacca-Vibhanga Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

It is also recorded in the Buddhist Commentaries that after the monks had gone for their alms-round, the Venerable Sāriputta arranged all the beds and seats which in haste had been left in disorder. He swept the rooms, cleaned the spittoons, and did all other similar work for others, lest ascetics of other Orders visiting the monastery should find fault with the monks.

### BUDDHA'S TRIBUTE TO SĀRIPUTTA

The Buddha paid the following glowing tribute to the Venerable Sāriputta Thera on his *parinibbāna*:

"To him who in five times a hundred lives  
Went forth to homelessness, casting away  
Pleasures the heart holds dear, from passion free,  
With faculties controlled—now homage pay  
To Sāriputta who has passed away!

To him who, strong in patience like the earth,  
Over his own mind had absolute sway,  
Who was compassionate, kind, serenely cool,  
And firm as earth withal. now homage pay  
To Sāriputta who has passed away!

Who, like an outcast boy of humble mind,  
enters the town and slowly wends his way  
From door to door with begging-bowl in hand,  
Such was this Sāriputta—homage pay  
To Sāriputta who has passed away!

One who in town or jungle, hurting none.  
Lived like a bull whose horns are cut away,  
Such was this Sāriputta, who had won  
Mastery of himself— then homage pay  
To Sāriputta who has passed away!"

## UDUVAP POYA

The full-moon day of *Uduvap* which falls in the month of December, commemorates the arrival in Ceylon of the illustrious Arahāt Theri Sanghamittā, daughter of Emperor Asoka, who brought with her a sapling of the sacred *Bodhi-tree* from India under whose benign shade the Buddha attained Supreme Enlightenment.

Her visit to this sacred Isle eventually led to the establishment of the *Bhikkhuni Sāsana* and the planting of the sacred Bodhi tree at Anuradhapura. These two momentous events gave a tremendous impetus and stimulus to the spiritual awakening of womankind. They were indeed awakened from their mental lethargy and spiritual apathy to realise their intrinsic greatness and moral stature.

Womankind, who had hitherto been treated as inferior to man, rose to sublime heights of spiritual glory and intellectual splendour with the establishment of the *Bhikkhuni Sāsana* by her. The smouldering embers of spiritual divinity lying dormant and latent within their minds blazed forth into the luminous light of wisdom when the *Arahāt Theri Sanghamittā* expounded the *Dhamma* which is glorious in the beginning, glorious in the middle and glorious in the end.

The establishment of the *Bhikkhuni Sāsana* by this illustrious daughter of India and eminent disciple of the Buddha also resulted in thousands of women renouncing the worldly life and donning the resplendent robes of a nun eventually reaching the pinnacle of perfection and wisdom. The unflagging zeal and spiritual fervour instilled into the minds of women-folk by her assumed unprecedented and unparalleled proportions and even princesses from distant lands were irresistibly drawn to the Sinhala nunneries and sought refuge from the torments and travails of life in these abodes of peace and sanctity and seats of

wisdom. They distinguished themselves as brilliant exponents of the *Dhamma* and also specialised in the *Vinaya Pitaka*.

### ERUDITION OF NUNS

The *Dīpavaṃsa*—(Ceylon Chronicle) bears ample testimony to this when it mentions the names of five renowned scholarly nuns. Even the *Abhidhamma*—the abstruse and intricate teachings of the Buddha—they studied and mastered and showed their intellectual prowess and spiritual insight by expounding it with clarity of mind and discernment. This is clearly disclosed in the exposition of the *Abhidhamma* by the Queen of Jettha Tissa to the delectation of her audience. They showed that they were in no way inferior to men in the dispensation of the Buddha. Their rare heights of spiritual fervour and devotion to the *Dhamma* are shown in all splendour and glory in their indefatigable efforts and consistency of purpose of jealously guarding the pristine teachings of the Buddha when it was on the verge of extinction during the *Brahmatissa* famine.

The remarkable degree of spiritual maturity of woman-kind is amply borne out in the fact that fourteen thousand *bhikkhunīs* attained the glorious state of *Arahatship* when Piyadassi Thera expounded the *Dhamma* at the inception of the construction of the great *Stupa* (*Ruvanveliseya*) at Anuradhapura.

It was also the Buddha who raised the status of women and brought them to a realization of their importance to society.

Before the advent of the Buddha women in India were not held in high esteem. One Indian writer, Hemachandra, looked down upon women as "the torch lighting the way to Hell" *Naraka mārgadvārasya dīpikā*.

The Buddha did not humiliate women, but only regarded them as feeble by nature. He saw the innate good of both men and women and assigned to them their due places in His teaching. Sex is no barrier for purification or service.

Sometimes the Pāli term used to connote women is *mātugāma* which means "mother-folk" or "society of mothers". As a mother a woman holds an honourable place in Buddhism. The mother is regarded as a convenient ladder to progress both material and spiritual and a wife is regarded as the "best friend" (*paramāsakhā*) of the husband.

### ORDINATION OF WOMEN

Although at first the Buddha refused to admit women into the Order on reasonable grounds, yet later He yielded to the entreaties of Venerable Ananda and His foster-mother, Mahā Pajāpati Gōtami, and founded the Order of *Bhikkhunīs* (Nuns). Thus in the history of the world it was the Buddha who thus founded the first society of nuns with rules and regulations to guide their conduct.

Just as *Arahats* Sāriputta and Moggallāna were made the two chief disciples in the Order of *Bhikkhus*, the oldest democratically constituted celibate Order, even so the *Arahats* Khēmā and Uppalavannā were made the two chief female disciples in the Order of *Bhikkhunīs*. Many other female disciples, too were named by the Buddha Himself as amongst most distinguished and pious followers.

### BODHI TREE AT ANURADHAPURA

To those who lacked the penetrating insight and maturity to understand the philosophical subtleties and finer points of the *Dhamma*, the sacred Bodhi tree at Anuradhapura, which is indeed a visible representation of the Buddha and which symbolises the embodiment of one's spiritual ideals, has evoked feelings of pious emotions and religious ecstasy in the minds of womankind and enabled them to contemplate on the incomparable qualities of the Buddha and eventually experience the blissful states of mind, calmness and serenity in much the same manner as shown in the Buddhist texts thus:

"When indeed the noble disciple contemplates thus, at such a time his heart is neither ensnared by greed, nor by hatred, nor by delusion. Uplifted is his mind at such a time, based on contemplation. And with



uplifted mind, the noble disciple gains understanding of the Law, delight in the Law. Being delighted, there arises rapture in his heart, inwardly he becomes calmed. And being inwardly calmed he feels happiness; and the mind of the happy one becomes collected. "Of this noble disciple, it is said that amongst misguided mankind he walks on the right path, that amongst suffering mankind he lives free from suffering" (*Anguttara Nikāya*).

Apart from those attaining peace of mind and happiness while recollecting the virtues of the Buddha, this venerable tree has verily given great solace and consolation to tormented and afflicted minds in times of pain, anguish and despair. Thus it could be said without any fear of contradiction that no other shrine in the world has acquired to a like degree the intense religious devotion of over twenty two centuries. Throughout the history of Lankā the precincts of the Holy Tree was the very nucleus of the Nation's veneration and spiritual life. King after king enriched it with images, gold, jewels, pillars and adornments of every kind. At the end of the 6th century it was covered with sheets of lead: in the 10th century the old soil was made good and the tree banked up. Then it was under the care of nuns.

This tree indeed was the holy of all holies in that colossal monastery the Mahā Vihāre—the greatest religious foundation in Sri Lanka. In the bleak and dark days of the Northern Kingdom through invasion and desertion the monks and nuns kept up the true dignity of the tree; during the long centuries through which Anuradhapura lay lost in jungle, it was round this holy tree that the last flickering remnants of the city's vitality were centred and in the revival of Buddhism today the tree is still the foremost object of love and adoration, visited by innumerable thousands each year from Burma, Thailand, China, Japan and other distant lands. With the resuscitation of Buddhism after Independence pious devotees have enriched this holy tree by having a railing of gold round it.

H. G. Wells expresses the sentiments with regard to the upkeep of the holy tree and the veneration paid to it, thus:

“Extraordinary attention has been given to the tree under which Gautama had this sense of mental clarity. It was a tree of the fig genus, and from the first it was treated with peculiar veneration. It was called the Bo Tree. It has long since perished, but close at hand lives another great tree which may be its descendant, and in Ceylon there grows to this day a tree, the oldest historical tree in the world, which we know certainly to have been planted as a cutting from the Bo Tree in the year 245 B.C. From that time to this it has been carefully tended and watered; its great branches are supported by pillars, and the earth has been terraced up about it so that it has been able to put out fresh roots continuously. It helps us to realise the shortness of all human history to see so many generations spanned by the endurance of one single tree”. (*The Outline of History*, Cassell 1934, page 392).

### CULTURAL AWAKENING

The arrival of Sangamittā Therī with a host of architects painters, sculptors, men of medicine and those learned in the Law, gave rise to a cultural awakening. Young men of Lankā became apprentices under these representatives of the arts and sciences of *Asōkan India*. In no time they became proficient, each one in his own line, like their tutors. However, their creations were in keeping with the native genius of the Sinhala race. In other words they did not slavishly imitate their Indian masters; but gave to their creations a local touch, a local tone and a habitat in keeping with Lankā's landscape.

The same could be said with regard to Ceylon's mural paintings and granite images, or for that matter, images built of bricks and mortar or carved out of wood, ivory or crystal. In all these the artists and artisans excelled, although they drew much inspiration from Indian sources. The serene smile on the face of the sedant Buddha or on the face of the recumbent Buddha depicting loving-kindness towards all creatures that breathe is certainly a remarkable feat in indigenous art. The secret of their success lies mainly in the deep religious consciousness born of confidence (*Saddhā*) in the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*.

In the field of medicine which extended from India to Ceylon's shores, the surgical skill of Susruta, the father of modern surgery, and the medical skill of Caraka, the renowned physician, were adapted to meet local needs and came under the name and style of *Ayurveda*. Another step in the right direction was the opening of hospitals based on the *Asōkan* model. In state craft the ten righteous laws (*Dasa Rāja Dhamma*) were observed by the king on the advice of his ministers. The *Asōkan* policy of mercy, liberality, truthfulness, purity, gentleness, respect for parents and teachers, kindness to animals and compassion towards the weak and infirm came to be the guiding factors in the day to day life of the rulers as well as the ruled. Tolerance was scrupulously practised in accordance with Buddhism.

On this sacred day of *Uduvaṣ* the magnetic and towering personality of Arahāt Sangamittā Therī, with her sterling qualities of heart and mind, should be and is a source of inspiration to womankind and also should be an object of the highest veneration to them till they themselves attain that glorious state of *Arahatship*. She indeed belongs to that long line of distinguished *Arahat Therīs and Theras* from the Buddha's time who are described in the Buddhist texts thus:

"Of noble conduct is the community of noble disciples of the Blessed One, of upright conduct, of right conduct, of dutiful conduct; namely, the four pairs of noble disciples or the eight individuals. This community of the disciples of the Blessed One is worthy of sacrifices, worthy of hospitality, worthy of gifts, worthy of reverential, salutation, is an incomparable field for merit in the world". (*Majjhima Nikāya*, I. 181; *Anguttara Nikāya* I 208).

And the disciple who constantly practises the contemplation on the virtues of the *Sangha*, comes to have respect and faith in it, and is not overcome by fear and dread. He or she is able to bear pain, and he or she could visualise for himself/herself that they are living in the presence of the great community of *Arahats*, and their minds tend towards the attainment of the *Sangha's* special qualities.

If developing this mindfulness of the virtues of the *Sangha* they fail to reach *Arahatship* in the present life, certainly they are assured of a happy destiny. (*Visuddhimagga-Path of Purification*).

### PLACE GIVEN TO WOMEN BY BUDDHA

It is relevant here to discuss the place given to woman by the Buddha.

In the galaxy of Perfect Ones (*Arahants*) among Nuns that adorn our sacred books are found the names of: Mahā Pajāpati Gōtamī (foster-mother of Lord Buddha), Khemā (the beautiful queen of King Bimbisāra), Uppalavannā, Patācārā, Dhammadinnā, Nandā and many others (vide: *Anguttara Nikāya—Part I—Ētadagga Pali, Apadāna and Theri Gāthā*).

Among the lay women devotees known for their piety and learning are: Sujātā, Visākhā (otherwise known as Migāra Māthā), Uttarā, Suppāvāsā, Mallikā, Khujjuttarā, Sāmāvati, Nakulamātā and a host of others.

To perceive the impermanency of conditioned existence while still bearing her dead baby boy and failing to obtain a few grains of mustard seed as stipulated by the Blessed One is indeed the hall-mark of intellectual acumen. Listen to what Kisā Gotami says:—

“No village law, no law of market town,  
No law of a single house is this—  
Of all the world, and all the worlds of gods  
This only is the Law, that all things are impermanent”.  
(*Dhammapada verse*).

The *Bhikkhuni Samyutta of the Samyutta Nikāya* provides further information in regard to the intellectual prowess of Buddhist Nuns. I shall now proceed to relate the heroic stand taken by *Bhikkhuni Somā* when confronted with Mara, who appeared before her in the guise of a young gallant. *Theri Somā* was a daughter of the Chaplain to King Bimbisāra.



One day, having had her noon-day meal, she repaired to a woodland, not far from, Sāvātthi, and seated beneath a tree was soon in an ecstatic bliss (*Jhāna*).

Then Māra, the Evil One, stood before her intent on disturbing Sōmā's mental poise. It must be mentioned that she had already attained *Arahathood*. Māra addressed her in this insolent manner:—

*Yam taṃ isihi pattaḃbaṃ  
Thānaṃ durahi sambhavaṃ  
Mātaṃ duvaṅgula paññāya  
Sakkā paṇṇotu mūḥhiyā.*

This verse means: *Arahathood* could only be gained by the wise (*rishi*), and that too with much difficulty; it is beyond the reach of a woman possessed of two finger-length wisdom.

Before I give you Sōmā's reply to this, I shall examine Māra's statement. Admittedly to gain *Arahathood* is a stupendous task—a task which involves a gradual training, a gradual practice in *Sīla*, *Samādhi* and *Paññā*. Māra was ignorant of the fact that she was an *Arahant*. He thought that she was trying to concentrate. He wanted to prevent her gaining the highest good. Māra was merely expressing the common belief at that time that a woman's wisdom was confined to the length of two fingers. Spinning and weaving was in those days, a house to house occupational activity of women. The index finger and the middle finger were used in spinning cotton, and women concentrated on these two fingers. Hence the origin of the adage two finger-length wisdom (*duvaṅgula paññāya*). The *Sinhala*s had been a little more generous towards their women folk, in that they measured the wisdom of their women by the length of the handle of the coconut spoon.

### WOMAN'S WISDOM

We accordingly realize that the popular belief that woman's wisdom is so very insignificant, is a mere myth. Buddhism gave the lie direct to this popular belief by visible evidence, in that women reached the highest peak of wisdom in the Buddha *Sāsana*.



Now to come to Theri Somā's reply it is significant that the reply indicates that she had recognized the intruder as Mara. To the self-conceited Māra, who was blissfully ignorant of her intellectual capacity, she tells him to find out one like himself infatuated with the SELF:—

*Itthī bhāvo kiṃ kairā cittaṃhi sūssāhite  
Nānamhi vatthamānamhi sammā dhammaṃ vipassato  
Yassanūna siyā evaṃ itthāham purisotivā  
Kincivāpana aññasmim taṃ mārovattu maraḥati.*

“What should the woman-state count for me, in her who with mind well concentrated sees with penetrative wisdom the true nature of all phenomena? To one for whom the thought arises: “I am a woman”, or “I am a man” or “I am anything else”,—Mara, go find him, mark him well and make the statement you made to me”.

The reply is both bold and to the point. Its terse simplicity is evidence of a deep understanding and realization of the three fundamental characteristics of phenomenal existence namely: (a) impermanence, (2) imperfection and (3) impersonality or no-self, no-Soul. Buddhism stands unique in the bold assertion of a no-Self or no-Soul on verifiable data. *Bhikkhuni* Somā in a masterful manner emphasises this uniqueness. What she says is based on analytical knowledge, knowledge gained by extra-sensory Wisdom. The psycho-physical (*nāma-rūpa*) combination called a body exists, but there is no being, no person, no man, no woman no soul, no self and nothing belonging to anyone, except a concatenation of forces and qualities, ever arising and disappearing from moment to moment—a dynamic process of being born and dying.

And this knowledge is gained by a systematic development (*bhāvanā*) of one's consciousness founded on moral habits. This is the Noble Eight-fold Path in its three divisions of Morality (*Sīla*) Concentration (*saṃādhi*) and Wisdom (*paññā*).

This knowledge according to Buddhism could be gained both by man and woman.

The Theri Gāthā graphically relate how thousands of women joined the Order of Bhikkhunis, either because of domestic bickerings, or because of self-conviction, or because of unbearable sorrow, or because of the urge to gain freedom, or the urge of the newly emancipated slave girls to gain freedom from samsaric suffering. In this list are found courtezans and criminals as well. The *Uddāna* also provides biographies of women, quite a good number, who had gained existential deliverance (*vimutti*).

### KISĀGŌTAMĪ AND PATĀCĀRĀ

We have the story of that young mother Kisāgōtami mentioned earlier whose sorrow knew no bounds when her only baby son died. It was a grain of mustard seed that illumined her consciousness to see Reality and attain Nibbāna. Her domestic woes are set forth thus:

“Woeful in woman’s lot hath he declared,  
 Charioteer of men to be tamed;  
 Woeful when sharing home with hostile wives,  
 Woeful when giving birth in bitter pain,  
 Some seeking death or e’er they suffer twice,  
 Piercing the throat, the delicate poison take”.

The story of Patācārā who lost her children, her husband and her parents is sufficient cause for committing a rash act. But, watching the flow of water, she gained *Arahathood*.

Of the intellectuals, we have Dhammadinnā who left her home with the full and unreserved consent of her husband Visakhā. She gained Enlightenment. She was placed first by the Buddha as the ablest exponent of the *Dhamma*. The illuminating conversation between her and her husband is recorded in the Culla-Vēdalla Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya.

We have the story of Queen Khemā who avoided the Buddha because of beauty-conceit, whereas her royal husband King Bimbisāra sought the Buddha’s presence. Moreover, he built the palatial Vēluvanārāmaya for the Buddha and His disciples. However, Khēmā when she

became convinced of her folly, left the palace and joined the Order of Nuns and she became the chief among the female disciples.

The story of Punna, the slave girl, is interesting. She joined the Order of Nuns and in no time she became so much proficient in the *Dhamma* as to declare boldly against Vedic lore. She said: "If bathing, ablution in wells and rivers could purify a person, then fishes and crocodiles, turtles and water-snakes would be purified and go straight to heaven".

Courtesans are not damned, they can also gain spiritual emancipation, provided they give up their evil ways and follow the Buddha's Middle Way. A notable example, among others, was Ambapāli.<sup>1</sup>

These few classic instances prove beyond all doubt the important role played by women in the time of the Buddha.

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1. Extracts from T. H. Perera's articles appearing in the *Bosat* of July 1963 and December 1963.

## DURUTHU POYA

The *Duruthu Poya* which falls on the full-moon day of the month of January is of the greatest religious and historical importance to the people of Ceylon as it marks the Buddha's visit to this sacred isle in the *ninth month* of his Buddhahood.

The Buddha himself visited this island on three occasions to prepare the ground for the introduction of the *Dhamma*, which he perceived through his omniscience, would endure longest here for the welfare of gods and men. Even on his deathbed the Blessed One assigned Sakra, the king of the gods, the prime duty of protecting the island and the Buddha *Sāsana*.

"My doctrine, O Sakra, will eventually be established in the island of Lanka; and on this day, Vijaya, eldest son of Sinhabahu, king of Sinhapura in the Lala country, lands there with seven hundred followers, and will assume sovereignty there. Do, thou, therefore, guard well the Prince and his train and the Island of Lankā".

On receiving the Buddha's command, Sakra summoned Vishnu:

"Do Thou, O lotus hued one, protect with zeal, Prince Vijaya and his followers and the Doctrine that is to endure in Lankā for full five thousand years". (*Mahavansa*)

## BUDDHA'S FIRST VISIT

To Mahiyangana, in the Uva Province of Ceylon belongs the proud distinction of being unique in the history of Ceylon as well as in the history of Buddhism in Lanka as it is the first spot in this land intimately associated with the name and the very presence of the Buddha himself. For it was to Mahiyangana that the Buddha came on the first of his three visits to Lanka, and it was there that the first

*Stūpa* was built enshrining a lock of his hair—a relic all the more precious because it was gifted by himself, out of his body, in his very lifetime. This sacred relic of the Buddha and his other bodily relics are regarded by Buddhists as supreme objects of reverence and veneration.

### BUDDHA'S RELICS THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

It is therefore relevant to discuss the place of Buddha Relics in Buddhism. In the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* the Buddha says thus:

“This Ananda is the way they should treat the remains of the *Tathāgata*. A *Stūpa* should be erected over the remains to the *Tathāgata*, And whosoever shall there place garlands or perfumes, or lights or makes salutations there, or become in its presence, calm in heart; that shall long be to them a profit and a joy”.

These felicitous and encouraging words of the Buddha have undoubtedly inspired great and pious kings to construct stupendous structures enshrining relics of the Buddha. Throughout the period of over twenty two centuries, amidst the changing vicissitudes of life, in days of calm and peace and in storm and strife these magnificent edifices which indeed are the symbolic manifestations of the Buddha have captivated the imagination of the peoples of Lankā and Buddhists all over the world and inspired them to heights of spiritual ecstasy and also evoked feelings of pious emotions and serene joy.

Through pure love and gratitude and spontaneous reverence a child places a bowl of fragrant flowers or a portion of delicious food which a dead parent particularly relished before a portrait, hung in a prominent place. On the ideological plane we find respect in the form of laying of wreaths etc., paid to great national and social reformers who have wrought radical changes in the social and cultural set-up for the benefit of mankind.

In much the same manner, Buddhists revere and venerate the Buddha who had sacrificed and suffered so much in his search of supreme Enlightenment and deliverance for



suffering humanity. He was indeed the Blessed One, he was exalted, omniscient, endowed with knowledge and virtue, auspicious, knower of the worlds, a guide incomparable for the training of individuals, teacher of gods and men, enlightened and holy.

### THREE OBJECTS OF WORSHIP (CETIYAS)

There being no Buddha living, the Buddhists worship the three *Cetiyas*, meaning literally pegs on which to hang one's thoughts. In answer to a question by the Buddha's sincere disciple and devoted attendant, the Venerable Ānanda Thera, the Buddha specifies the three *Cetiyas*—objects of reverence as follows: They are objects of reverence appertaining to the body (*Sāririka*), objects of reverence appertaining to personal use (*Pāribhogika*), and objects of reverence reminiscent of the Buddha (*Uddesika*). (*Kālinga Bodhi Jātaka* No. 479).

A shrine for the relic of the body is made after the Buddha attains *parinibbana*. The relics of a body are the tooth, collar-bone, larynx, forehead-curl, frontal bone, and other smaller bodily relics. Most of his relics are now enshrined in several *dāgabas* or *stūpas* found in Buddhist countries.

Relics of personal use or wear (*Pāribhogika*) are the things used by the Buddha, e.g. Alms-bowl, Robes, and the Bodhi-tree at his Enlightenment which now serve as a symbol or visible representation of his supreme Enlightenment.

A memorial relic (*Uddesika*) is represented by the calm and serene image of the Buddha radiating incomparable love to all beings.

### BUDDHA'S BODY RELICS

As recorded in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* the relics that were left after the Buddha's cremation were placed in a golden chamber by the Malla princes in the city of Kusināra and honour, respect, and veneration were paid to them for seven days. Thereafter they were divided into eight portions among the eight kingdoms of

India, wherein were built *stūpas* enshrining them. King Asoka in the eighth year of his coronation (261 B.C.) set about excavating these *stūpas* and obtained some of these relics. Buddhist literary tradition records that King Asoka built eighty four thousand *stūpas* and monasteries enshrining the sacred relics thus obtained.

With the introduction of Buddhism to Ceylon by Arahant Mahinda Thera, son of king Asoka, and during the reign of pious and devout kings, Ceylon became the proud custodian of almost all the important bodily relics of the Buddha.

The left eye-tooth of the Buddha was the most precious and priceless of all Buddhist relics ever brought to Ceylon. It was brought here in the ninth year of the reign of Sri Megavarna (71 A.C.). In times of internal dissension and strife claimants to the throne vied with one another in taking possession of this sacred relic, as the person who was fortunate in possessing it commanded the respect and approbation of the public. It is recorded in the *Dhatuvamsa* that before the relic was brought to Ceylon there were constant disputes among Indian ruling princes for the possession of it. The collar-bone of the Buddha together with the alms-bowl and a large quantity of his bodily relics were brought to Ceylon by Sumana Sāmanera. This was done at the request of Arahant Mahinda Thera and King Devānampiyatissa. (*Mahāvamsa XVII 9-21*).

The collar-bone of the Buddha which was enshrined in the Thupārāma Dagaba became the first *Cetiya* to be built in Ceylon. It was built by Devānampiyatissa. The *kesa dhatu*, the hair relic of the Buddha, was brought to Ceylon by Silakala during the reign of Moggallāna I. (496-513 A.C.).

The *pātra-dhatu*, the alms-bowl of the Buddha which was brought during the reign of Devānampiyatissa was safely kept within the palace itself. As this valuable and precious relic was later considered a priceless national possession, one of the seven Tamil invaders during the reign of Vattagamani fled with it to India. But it was brought back to Ceylon in the second century by Gajabāhu (171-193 A.C.). This sacred object was used by Upatissa I (4th

century) in a ceremony to dispel famine and plague. This relic became the national palladium of the Sinhala nation as it was the case with the sacred tooth relic in later times.

### IS WORSHIP OF RELICS BUDDHISTIC?

One may ask whether all this respect, veneration, devotion, and adoration paid to the sacred Relics of the Buddha is in keeping with the pristine and original teachings of the Buddha.

The Buddha himself, as recorded in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, has stated that four kinds of persons are worthy to be respected and venerated by building a *cetiya* or *stūpa*—

“There are four persons Ānanda, who are worthy of a stūpa, who are those four? A *Tathāgata*, *Arahant*, *Sammāsambuddha* is worthy of a *stūpa*, so also is a *pacceka-buddha*, and a disciple of the *Tathāgata*, and a universal monarch. And Why Ānanda, is a *Tathāgata*, *Arahant*, *Sammāsambuddha* worthy of a *stupa*? Because Ānanda, at the thought;

“This is the stūpa of the Blessed One, Perfect One, Fully Enlightened One, the hearts of many people will be calmed, and made happy; and so calm and with their minds established in faith therein, they at the breaking up of the body, after death will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness”.

In keeping with these inspiring words of the Buddha, Arahant Mahinda Thera in his usual gentle manner suggested to king Devānampiyatissa, the idea of building a *cetiya* to enshrine the relics of the Buddha. Thus the Thupārāma, the first *dāgaba* or *stūpa* enshrining the collarbone and other relics of the Buddha, came to be constructed by King Devānampiyatissa at Anuradhapura in Ceylon. The relics of the Buddha were regarded as representing Him and their enshrinement was as good as the Buddha's residence in Ceylon.

According to Buddhist commentaries a request was made by Venerable Arahāt Maha Kassapa after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* to collect the relics of the Buddha and enshrine them in a *cetiya*. The commentary to the *Dhammapāda* states that Lord Buddha praised a man who paid this respects to a *cetiya* or *stūpa* of the former Buddha Kassapa though he was blissfully ignorant of the significance of the *cetiya*. The relics of several of the Buddha's disciples, such as Śāriputta, Maha Moggallāna and Santati, were enshrined in *cetiyas* on the specific instructions of the Buddha himself. We also have evidence from the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, a Buddhist commentary, that the relics of long-lived Buddhas remain as fewer segments but as regards Gotama Buddha they separate into varying size because he knew that he would pass away before long and if his *Sāsana* was to last for long and spread its benign message to suffering humanity at least his relics would be available to pious devotees who would build *cetiyas* and even those who build a *cetiya* enshrining a relic as small as a mustard seed would thereby be reborn into blissful states of existence after death.

It is also mentioned in the same commentary that when a pious devotee wends his way to a *cetiya* to pay his respects and veneration, he performs the bodily act of love (*Mettā kaya kamma*). And when he utters the words: "Let us go to worship a *cetiya* or a Bodhi-tree" he performs a verbal act of love (*Mettā vaci kamma*).

The merit and benefit gained is very much greater if he goes with a delighted mind full of faith and love, and if he happens to die on his way he would be reborn in a happy state. The commentary to the *Vibhaṅga* states that by looking at the *cetiya* or the Bodhi-tree one gets *Buddhā-lambana pīti* or joy derived by looking at the Buddha or contemplating on him.

Criticism has often been levelled by non-Buddhists and even some Buddhists that the worship of relics, *dāgabas*, and images is a form of idolatry, a ritual and ceremony which is alien and diametrically opposed to the spirit of Buddhism. Is this criticism justified? At the outset it should



be distinctly and clearly understood that Buddhists do not worship, pray and ask for worldly favours from the Buddha as is the practice in theistic religions.

### PURPOSE OF WORSHIPPING RELICS

One could understand whether this criticism is justified only when one takes into consideration the object or purpose of a Buddhist paying respect and veneration to the Buddha-relics and the benefits derived therein. In the first place it is an expression of gratitude, love, devotion, and reverence to a great spiritual teacher who sacrificed and suffered so much to gain Supreme Enlightenment, and also showed the path to freedom and happiness from the bonds and shackles of existence to suffering humanity.

We may now ask, is it not quite natural that feelings of love, gratitude, devotion, and reverence, should spontaneously arise through one's entire being, through acts of the body and speech as well as through one's thoughts, to one worthy of one's respect and veneration. Will one for instance hide one's feelings and one's innermost thoughts of gratitude towards one's departed parents and teachers and other loved ones who have played a significant role in shaping and moulding one's life and bringing hope, freedom and happiness in the trials and tribulations of life. Reverence is paid to those worthy of reverence and is one of the supreme blessings mentioned by the Buddha in the *Mangala Sutta*. Is not the Buddha worthy of greater veneration and the highest reverence than the reverence paid to lesser beings? Therefore the relics of the Buddha have become the symbols of pious devotion and the precious and priceless objects of worship to Buddhists.

### PRACTICE—HIGHEST HOMAGE TO BUDDHA

It should be distinctly understood that Buddhism does not in the least impose upon its adherents the observance of any outward forms of devotion or worship. It is entirely left to the individual temperament and character of Buddhists which differ so vastly with each person. No Buddhist should feel himself cast into an iron mould, be it of a devotional or rationalistic nature. Buddhism as a doctrine of



the middle way avoids all forms of extreme devotionism and radical rationalism which disparage outward forms of worship. One should be liberal enough to appreciate the individual needs and preferences of others which differ from his own. However, the highest form of worship extended to the Buddha is to diligently practise his teachings. Seeing the sal trees blooming with flowers out of season and other demonstrations of piety the Buddha exhorted his disciples as follows:

“It is not thus Ānanda that the *Tathāgata* is respected, revered, venerated, honoured, and revered. Whatever *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhuni*, *upāsaka* or *upāsikā* lives in accordance with the teaching, conducts himself dutifully, and acts righteously, it is he who respects, reverences, venerates, honours, and reveres the *Tathāgata* with the highest homage. Therefore Ānanda should you train yourselves thus, “Let us live in accordance with the teaching, dutifully conducting ourselves and acting righteously”. (*Maha-Parinibbāna Sutta*).

### SIGNIFICANCE OF BUDDHIST RITUALS

Is the practice of offering flowers to the Buddha-relics, and the stūpas which enshrine the relics a meaningless and ritualistic ceremony? To the casual observer and non-Buddhist this practice amounts to a mere mechanical act or ritual, devoid of any significance whether religious or philosophical. But to one who is conversant with the teachings of the Buddha, this act, if done in the proper manner, is one of great importance because it conveys profound and sublime truths taught in Buddhism. When a Buddhist offers flowers or lights a lamp before a Buddha image or some sacred object and ponders over the supreme qualities of the Buddha he is not praying to anyone. These are not rites, rituals or acts of worship. The flowers that soon fade, and the flames that die down speak to him, and tell him of the impermanency of all conditioned things. The image serves him as an object for concentration and meditation; he gains inspiration and endeavours to emulate the qualities of the Master. Those who do not understand

the importance of this simple offering, hastily conclude that it is idol-worship. Nothing could be further from the Truth.

The path showed by the Buddha for the complete cessation of suffering is through *dāna* (generosity), *sīla* (Morality) and *bhāvanā* (meditation) which eventually pave the way for the entire eradication of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and ignorance (*moha*). These evil propensities and tendencies of the mind impede the path to freedom and happiness. On the other hand, the noble qualities of *dāna*, *sīla* and *bhāvanā* are present in the minds of devotees in the offering of flowers.

Let us see for ourselves how these qualities are present and to what extent they help in the elimination of greed, hate and ignorance. The flower is the acme of nature's perfection. It is beauty itself. Its beautiful colour pleases the sight. Its softness pleases the sense of touch. Its fragrance is appealing to the sense of smell. The thought of it is also gratifying. One offers such sweet-smelling flowers to the Buddha-relic or image. It is indeed a *gift* or *dāna* which eliminates for the time being greed from the mind of the devotee.

When one offers these flowers with faith (*saddhā*) one is naturally disciplined in body and speech, and hence *sīla* or virtue is present, and therefore he is free from any form of ill-will or hatred. When one contemplates that these fresh, beautiful and fragrant flowers will not last for long but would wither and fade away and ponders much in the same manner in regard to his physical body that it is subject to impermanence (*anicca*), sorrow (*dukkha*) and soullessness (*anattā*), then it becomes *bhavana* or meditation. Therefore the flowers themselves serve as the peg on which to hang one's aspiring thoughts, the mind does the rest; it makes the simple act sublime and noble.

#### BUDDHA RELICS SERVE AS OBJECTS OF MEDITATION

More important and of greater spiritual value than these outward forms of devotion to the Buddha-relics is that they serve as an object of meditation on the supreme and peer-

less qualities of the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*—the supreme objects of a Buddhist's reverence and devotion, also called the Three Jewels. The sacred relics of the Buddha and the *stūpas* which enshrine the relics serve the purpose of fixing the mind on some lofty object. The Buddha represented by the relics is revered not as a personality of such and such a name nor as a deity, but as the embodiment of Enlightenment which is also the ideal and cherished goal of a Buddhist and which he himself ardently and fervently aspires to by meditating on the Buddha.

A passage often recurring in the Buddhist texts states that a devout lay-disciple has confidence (*saddhā*). He believes in the Enlightenment of the Perfect One. This confidence which is the outcome of his devotion is not blind faith based on mere hearsay but is derived from the devotee's reasoned conviction based on his understanding of the Buddha-word which speaks to him clearly with a voice of unmistakable enlightenment. Therefore the twin virtues of faith (*saddhā*) and understanding (*paññā*) are harmoniously blended. There is no slavish devotion which forms an integral part of theistic doctrines and which is accompanied by prayers, vows and unquestioned obedience to a creator God, his earthly incarnation or his deity. Prayers, rituals and vows have no place in such worship. For the Buddhist asks no worldly boons or favours, but merely seeks to purify his mind, and aspires to attain his goal.

### BENEFITS OF DEVOTIONAL MEDITATION

What are the benefits accruing to one who practises such devotional meditation in the presence of the Buddha-relics, *dāgaba* or image? The first benefit is that it concentrates the mind and leads to its purification. The mind is liberated for the time being from the fears and anxieties, worries and troubles, trials and tribulations that torment the minds of ordinary people. This is eloquently brought out by the Buddha in the *Anguttara Nikaya* as follows:

“When a noble disciple contemplates upon the Enlightened One, at that time his mind is not enwrapped in lust nor in hatred, nor in delusion. At such a time his mind is rightly directed, it has got rid of lust,

is aloof from it, is free from it. Lust is here a name of the five sense desires. By cultivating this contemplation, many beings become purified". (*Anguttara Nikāya: The Sixes No. 25*).

If by practising this devotional meditation one endeavours to live as it were in the Master's presence (*sattā sammukhi bhūto*), one will feel ashamed to do or speak or think anything unworthy, one will shrink back from evil; and as a positive reaction one will feel inspired to high endeavour, in emulation of the Master's great example (*Visuddhimagga*).

Images, and not abstract concepts, are the language of the subconscious. If, therefore, the image of the Enlightened One is often created, within one's mind, as the embodiment of Man perfected, it will deeply penetrate into the subconscious mind, and, if sufficiently strong, will act as an "automatic brake" against evil impulses. In such a way, the subconscious may become a powerful ally in gaining selfmastery while normally it is too often the hidden enemy of such endeavour.

It also produces the thrill of religious joy which comes with the recollection of the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*, which is purely psychological. If this sublime attitude of mind can be maintained so that it constitutes a wholesome state of the mind to inspire and guide us, amidst the storms and tempests of life and amidst the states of depression and despondency of the mind, then it serves a useful and valuable purpose. The recollection of the Buddha being productive of joy is also an effective way of invigorating and stimulating the mind, of lifting it from morbid states of listlessness, tension, fatigue, and frustration, which are common features in our daily lives. The joy thus produced may bring about that self-forgetfulness which is an important factor for concentration. Joy (*pīti*) produces calm (*passaddi*), calm leads to happiness (*sukha*) and happiness leads to concentration (*samādhi*). The function of devotional meditation cannot be better described than in the words of the Master.



"When a noble disciple contemplates upon the Enlightened One, at that time his mind is not enwrapped by lust nor by delusion and at that time his mind is rightly directed towards the Perfect One (*Tathāgata*). And with a rightly directed mind the noble disciple gains enthusiasm for the goal, enthusiasm for the *Dhamma*, gains the delight derived from the *Dhamma*. In him thus delighted joy arises; to one joyfully minded, body and mind become calm, calm in body and mind he feels happiness, and happiness leads to concentration. Such a one is called a noble disciple who among humanity gone wrong, has attained to what is right, who among a humanity beset by troubles, dwells free of troubles. (*Anguttara Nikāya* No. 10).

### GREAT MINDS ARE INSPIRED

It is noteworthy that even great thinkers and philosophers have been inspired by the calm and composed, serene and sublime personality of the Buddha represented in the form of images. Jawaharlal Nehru in his Autobiography writes:

"At Anuradhapura I liked greatly an old seated statue of the Buddha. A year later, when I was in Dhera Dun jail, a friend in Ceylon sent me a picture of this statue, and I kept it on my little table in my cell. It became a precious companion for me, and the strong, calm features of the Buddha statue soothed me and gave me strength and helped me to overcome many a period of depression".

P. D. Ouspensky, a distinguished Russian philosopher says in his book entitled "A New Model of the Universe" on seeing a Buddha-image at the Karagampitiya temple at Dehiwala, Ceylon, thus:—

"I began to feel the strange effect which the Buddha's face produced on me. All the gloom that arose from the depths of my soul seemed to clear up. It was as if the Buddha's face communicated its calm to me.



Everything that upto now had troubled me and appeared so serious and important, now became so small, insignificant and unworthy of notice, that I only wondered how it could have ever affected me. And I felt that no matter how agitated, troubled, irritated, and torn with contradictory thoughts and feelings a man might be when he came here, he would go away calm, quiet, enlightened, understanding.....".

Referring to images, the great philosopher Count Keyserling writes:

"I know nothing more grand in the world than the figure of the Buddha. It is a perfect embodiment of spirituality in the visible domain".

If great and eminent men who were non-Buddhists were inspired and elevated in mind by such external symbols and also were able to gain some insight into the profound truths of Buddhism, need one say more with regard to Buddhists who value these objects with great adoration and reverence, and which serve them as stepping stones to spiritual heights and edification of the mind ?

## NAVAM POYA

The *Navam Poya* which falls on the full moon day in the month of February commemorates the following significant events in the dispensation of the Buddha.

(1) The conferment of the Exalted titles of Chief Disciples on Sāriputta Arahat Thera and Moggallān Arahat Thera by the Buddha in the presence of one thousand two hundred and fifty Arahat Theras.

(2) The Buddha proclaims for the first time a code of fundamental ethical precepts for the monks.

(3) The Buddha announces that within three months His *Parinibbāna* will take place.

### SĀRIPUTTA AND MOGGALLĀNA THERAS

Sāriputta and Moggallāna Theras were two devoted and intimate friends whose common purpose was to find out a solution to the problems of life and death. With such a noble mission in life they have arduously and relentlessly pursued for the search of Truth. In the dim distant past, lost and enshrouded in the mist of time, in the dispensation of the Buddha Anomadassi, Sāriputta and Moggallāna made the lofty and ardent aspiration to become the chief disciples of a Buddha. Buddha Anomadassi, through His super-intellectual vision, foresaw that the wishes of Sāriputta and Moggallāna would come to pass in the lifetime of our Buddha Gotama. Thus having cultivated and practised the Ten Perfections (*Pārami*) for one *Asankeyya* and a *lakh of Kalpas* (incalculable aeons) through many births their fervent aspirations reached fulfilment in the lifetime of our Buddha.

Sāriputta formerly known as Upatissa, who in time was exalted to the rank of the first Chief Disciple of the Buddha, was noted for his penetrative insight, rare wisdom, and depth and range of understanding. He indeed ranked next to the Buddha in wisdom, and in his ability to teach the Doctrine. His keen and sharp intellect, wisdom and unblemished character, earned for him the lofty appellation '*Anu Buddha*'

—the second Buddha. Venerable Moggallāna formerly known as Kōlita, was conferred the exalted title of the second Chief Disciple. He distinguished himself in psychic powers. He stands unequalled in this sphere, but next in pre-eminence to the Buddha.

### BUDDHA'S RESPECT TOWARDS THEM

The respect and high esteem extended by the Buddha to these great personages is clearly shown in the *Sacca-Vibhanga Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 141). The Buddha addressing the monks says thus: "Monks, associate and keep company with Sāriputta and Moggallāna, for they are wise and great supporters of their brothers in the holy life. Sāriputta may be compared to a mother, and Moggallāna to a nurse. For Sāriputta educates you for entrance into the stream that leads to Nibbāna (intuitive insight into the true nature of actuality and the first glimpse of the Further Shore), but Moggallāna trains you for the highest goal of self-realisation. Sāriputta is well qualified to proclaim and teach and point out, establish, reveal, analyse, and make clear the Four Noble Truths".

The Buddha further extols Sāriputta's unique qualities in the *Anupada Sutta* as follows: "If one could ever say rightly of one that he has come to mastery and perfection in noble virtues, in noble concentration, in noble wisdom and noble liberation, it is Sāriputta that one could thus rightly declare. If one could ever say rightly of one that he is the Blessed One's true son, born of speech, born of the *Dhamma* formed of the *Dhamma*, heir to the *Dhamma*, not heir to worldly benefit, it is of Sāriputta that one could thus rightly declare. After me, O Monks, Sāriputta rightly turns the Supreme Wheel of *Dhamma*, even as I have turned it".

Once when certain allegations were levelled against the great Thera Sāriputta, he remained unruffled and unperturbed and the Buddha made the following comment: "Monks it is impossible for Sāriputta and His like to cherish anger or hatred. Sāriputta's mind is like the great earth, firm like a gate-post, like a pool of still water. Unresentful

like the earth, firm like a gate post, with mind like a clear pool, such is the virtuous man for whom the round of births exists no more". (*Dhammapada*, V. 95).

The Buddhist texts are replete with the wondrous psychic feats performed by the Venerable Moggallāna Thera in order to help beings on the path to freedom. One such instance is that once the Venerable Moggallāna by his powers of Iddhi extinguished the fires of *Avici* (Plane of Misery) and proclaimed the doctrine for a brief space of time to those unfortunate beings, thus affording them an opportunity to view an Aryan body and listen to the *Dhamma*. He was accustomed to traverse other world systems inhabited by beings and inquire of them how they had gained rebirth in those realms and what particular merit and demerit had conditioned their birth in those states of existence. The information he had gathered thus from them was related to beings on earth for their moral edification and spiritual illumination.

The Buddha advised His monks to emulate the actions of these two great disciples, thus: "A monk of faith, O bhikkhus, should cherish this right aspiration: 'Oh, may I become such as Sāriputta and Moggallāna'. For Sāriputta and Moggallāna are the model and standard for my bhikkhu disciples". (*Anguttara Nikāya II*, 131).

### CONVERSION TO BUDDHISM

It is interesting to discuss the circumstances which led to their conversion to the *Buddha Dhamma* as recorded in the *Mahā-Vagga* (1.23). It happened that one morning as Upatissa was in the main street of the king's town he saw some way off an ascetic like himself going on his alms-round. As he looked at him he was very much struck by everything about him. He seemed so modest in his whole demeanour, so calm and collected in all his ways of moving and standing still as he went in and out among the houses. Upatissa could not help but observe him and not only observe but admire. But when he had gone near to him his admiration changed into wonder and reverence, for there was a look on the face of the unknown ascetic such as he had never seen on the face of any ascetic before—a look of perfect



peace and serenity, as of a smooth unruffled lake under a calm, clear sky. 'Who is this' said Upatissa to himself, in amazement. What is he? Who may be his Teacher? What doctrine and discipline can it be that he follows? He met him and spoke thus: "Your comings and goings, brother so serene. Your countenance so clear and bright, fain would I know that one to follow whom you have left home and kindred behind that I may too sit at his feet and learn of him. What is your teacher's name and what is the doctrine he proclaims".

The unassuming ascetic who was no other person than the Arahāt Assaji modestly replied as is the characteristic of all great men thus: "There is One, of the ancient clan of the Sākyas, who has left all behind Him in order to lead the Holy Life: and great is His fame. To follow Him have I forsaken the world. It is He, the Blessed One, who is my teacher. And His is the Doctrine I profess.

"And what is that Doctrine, venerable Sir? What doctrine is it that your Master teaches? I too would know and follow it", said Upatissa eagerly, with a rising hope in his breast that perhaps now, at last, his and his friend Kōlitas long quest for the "Deathless" had reached a happy and successful end.

"I am only a novice, a new-comer into the Order of the Blessed One", replied the ascetic modestly. It is but a little while ago since I first began to learn under the Blessed One, and to follow His Rule and Discipline, so I do not yet know very much about His Teaching. I cannot explain it to you in every little point. But if it is just the pith of His Doctrine that you want, I can tell you that in a very few words".

"That is all I want", said Upatissa eagerly. "Tell me the substance. The substance is just what I wish to know.

#### MEMORABLE STANZA

What need to make a mountain of words about it?"

"Very well, then", replied the ascetic, listen; "And he repeated to the attentive Upatissa this memorable



stanza which crystalizes one of the important doctrines of the Buddha:

“How all things here through Cause have come,  
He hath made known,—the Awakened One,  
And how again they pass away,  
This too the Great Recluse doth say”. (Vinaya Pitaka).

That was all the ascetic said. But as Upatissa stood listening to him, in one swift flash of insight there dawned upon his mind in all its truth and verity, the mighty law taught by all the Buddhas—the Law that all that ever has or ever will come into existence, inevitably, unfailingly, without any exception whatever, must and will again pass out of existence, and that never can it be any otherwise. In that great moment, Upatissa saw clearly with his whole heart and mind, with his entire being, that only that which has never arisen, never come into existence, never entered the circle of change and Becoming,—that only this can be free from the Law of Change and Decay, only this can never die,—nothing else whatsoever; everything else must pass and perish and he said to the ascetic thus:

“If this is the Doctrine you have learned from your Teacher, then indeed you have found the state that is free from sorrow, free from death. You have found the Sorrowless, the Deathless that has not been made known to men for ages and ages”. Then with expressions of joyful gratitude, he took leave of the ascetic who thus in a moment with a stanza of four short lines only, had brought light to his clouded mind and he hurried off to find his friend Kōlita, and impart to him the glad tidings that at last the Deathless was found. Kōlita who was enlightened as his friend also attained the first stage of sainthood on hearing the whole stanza.

Overwhelmed with joy at their successful search after Peace, as in duty bound, they went to meet their teacher Sanjaya with the object of converting him to the new doctrine. Frustrated in their attempt, Upatissa and Kōlita, accompanied by many followers of Sanjaya, who readily joined them, repaired to the Veluvana monastery to visit their illustrious Teacher, the Buddha.

In compliance with their request, the Buddha admitted both of them to the Order by the mere utterance of the words—*Ehi Bhikkhave!* (Come, O Bhikkhus!).

### ATTAINS ARAHATSHIP

A fortnight later, the venerable Sāriputta attained *Arahatship* on hearing the Buddha expound the *Vedanā Pariggahā Sutta* to the wandering ascetic Dīghanakha. On the very same day in the evening the Buddha gathered round him his disciples and the exalted positions of the first and second disciples in the *Sangha* were respectively conferred upon the Theras Upatissa (Sāriputta) and Kōlita (Moggallāna), who also had attained *Arahatship*, a week earlier.

On reflection it might seem as if a simple stanza like this quoted above, simply uttered, were altogether too slight a cause to produce such a mighty effect as the turning to the Way of the Buddha of two great personages as Sāriputta and Moggallāna. But we must not forget the kind of past that lay behind these two. For many years they had been in search of the highest and noblest under the training of their teacher Sanjaya, following the path of self-mortification in the hope of attaining the object of their search. And albeit the Buddha has declared that the mere mortification of the flesh, of itself can never lead to Deliverance, still the high aspiration with which these two pursued the ascetic path, in large measure prepared them to lay immediate hold of the truth when it was laid before them even in such a seemingly simple yet highly concentrated form as that in which Assaji made it known to them.

It was with them in their condition as it might be with a man who has a pile of dry sticks all ready and prepared, soaked in oil, so that when he applied to it the tiny flame of an insignificant match, the whole mass bursts out at once into a mighty blaze. When the little match of Assaji's stanza was applied to the dry sticks of their ascetic discipline, all soaked in the oil of their ardent aspiration, immediately there burst forth in them such a great flame of *Paññā*, of wisdom, which burnt away all the dark jungle growth of their *Avijjā*, of their Ignorance; and forthwith they beheld the Light of the Master's Law and henceforth followed it.

But even lesser men than Sāriputta and Moggallāna, men less prepared to enter Wisdom's Way, also may find in Assaji's stanza something to help them along the road to Liberation. Such persons may find in it the statement of that great law of Cause and Effect which holds good throughout every sphere of the universe, — the law that everything which exists, only does so by reason of some antecedent cause, and with the cessation of that cause, it ceases to be. In other words: they may take it as the enunciation of the great Law of *Kamma*.

### BUDDHA'S RULES FOR MONKS

It is a noteworthy event that the Buddha promulgated certain fundamental ethical principles for the monks for the first time on this *Poya day*, which are as follows:—

“Not to do any evil,  
To cultivate good,  
To purify one's mind,—  
This is the advice of the Buddhas.

Forbearing patience is highest asceticism,  
Nibbāna is supreme—say the Buddhas.  
For he is not a recluse who harms another,  
Nor is he an ascetic who molests others.

Not insulting, not harming, restraint in the  
Fundamental Precepts, moderation in food,  
Secluded abode, devotion to lofty thoughts  
This is the Advice of the Buddhas”.

(*Dhammapada Verses 183, 184 and 185*)

These ethical precepts for the monks are preached by all Buddhas and form the only *Vinaya* rules for monks in the dispensation of Buddhas, whose life-spans are long. But in regard to the dispensation of Buddhas where the life-spans are short, as in the case of Gotama Buddha, these fundamental precepts form the *Vinaya* rules for the first twenty years of the Buddha's dispensation and thereafter various

other rules are promulgated by him, when some offence had been committed or when the question of a certain practice arose in the Order.

### ANNOUNCES HIS PARINIBBĀNA

The Buddha appeared on earth to teach the seekers of Truth things as they truly are and provide a unique path for the deliverance from all ills of life. During His long and successful ministry He fulfilled His noble mission to the satisfaction of both Himself and His Followers. In His eightieth year He felt that His work was over. He had given necessary instructions to His earnest followers—both the house-holders and the homeless ones—and they were not only firmly established in His Teachings but were also capable of expounding them to others. He therefore decided not to control the remainder of His life-span by His will power and by experiencing the bliss of *Arahatship*. While residing at the Cāpāla Chetiya the Buddha announced to Venerable Ānanda that He would pass away in three months' time.

Venerable Ānanda instantly recalled the saying of the Buddha and begged of Him to live for a kappa for the good and happiness of all.

"Enough, Ānanda, beseech not the Tathāgata. The time for making such a request is now past", was the Buddha's reply.

He then spoke on the fleeting nature of life and went with Venerable Ānanda to the Pinnacled Hall at Mahāvana and requested him to assemble all the Bhikkhus in the neighbourhood of Vesālī.

He then gave the following exhortation and publicly announced the time of His death to the *Sangha*: "Behold, O Bhikkhus, now I speak to you, Transient are all conditioned things. Strive on with diligence. The passing away of the Tathāgata will take place before long. At the end of three months from now the *Tathāgata* will pass away".

“Ripe is my age. Short is my life. Leaving you I shall depart. I have made myself my refuge. O Bhikkhus, be diligent, mindful and virtuous. With well-directed thoughts guard your mind. He who lives heedfully in this Dispensation will escape life’s wandering and put an end to suffering”.

Casting His last glance at Vesali, the Buddha went with Venerable Ānanda to Bhandagāma and addressing the *Bhikkhus* said:

“Morality, concentration, wisdom and Deliverance  
Supreme,  
These things were realised by the renowned Gōtama,  
Comprehending them, the Buddha taught the doctrine  
to the disciples.  
The Teacher with sight has put an end to sorrow and  
has extinguished all passions”.  
(*Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta*)



## MEDIN POYA

The advent of the *Medin Poya* which falls on the full moon day in the month of March commemorates the historic journey by the Buddha to the city of *Kapilavattu*, accompanied by a distinguished gathering of twenty thousand Arahats, on the invitation of His father King Suddhodhana. The journey took two months. His benign presence in the city of His birth led to four important and significant events. Firstly his father fond of Royal pomp and power, who had cherished for long that His worthy son would be the legitimate heir to the throne, perceived the spotless Eye of Truth and became a saint—Stream-Winner, *Sotāpatti*.

## TWIN WONDER

The King and the conceited elderly Sakyas refused to pay their respect and obeisance to the All Enlightened One when He arrived at the City of Kapilavattu. The Blessed One perceived through His super-intellectual vision, the frame of mind of the Sākya and to subdue their inordinate pride, He performed the Twin Wonder which is a unique power possessed by the Buddhas. By His psychic and supernatural powers he rose high up in the sky and caused fire and water to issue from the pores of His body simultaneously. This He did in twenty-two variations. The commentary on the *Patīsambhīdā-Magga* states that by fire and water are meant red and blue rays which emanated from the golden-hued body of the Buddha. His father seeing this extraordinary phenomenon immediately paid his homage to the Buddha. In like manner all the Sakyas were constrained to pay their utmost reverence to One who had brought so much solace and consolation to suffering humanity. Thereupon the Blessed One came down from the sky and instantly an unexpected shower of rain fell upon the Sākya.

This strange and rare phenomenon indeed led to a discussion among them as to its cause. The Exalted One disclosed to them its significance and related to them the

*Vessantara Jātaka* according to which a similar incident took place in the presence of his relatives in a previous birth. The Sākyaas were delighted and elevated in mind by this felicitous discourse and departed.

### BUDDHA'S FATHER ATTAINS ARAHATSHIP

As the Buddha was not invited by them for the noon meal, He and His disciples went for alms from house to house in the city of Kapilavatthu. This action of the Buddha enraged the King when it was brought to his notice by his daughter-in-law, Yasodharā. The King perturbed in mind and in great agitation hurried to the scene and saluting the Buddha exclaimed: "Son, Why do you disgrace me thus? Do you not know that I can easily supply you and your *bhikkhus* with food?" The Buddha replied "It is the custom of my race". But the king said: How can this be? You are descended from kings, and not one of them ever begged for food". "O great king", rejoined the Buddha, "You and your race may claim the descent from kings; my descent is from the Buddhas of old. They, begging their food, lived on alms". The king made no reply, and the Blessed One continued "It is customary, O King, when one has found a hidden treasure, for him to make an offering of the most precious jewel to his father. Suffer me, therefore, to open this treasure of mine which is the *Dhamma*, and accept from me this Gem". And the Blessed One recited the following memorable stanza.

"Be not heedless in standing (at door for alms)  
Lead a righteous life.  
The righteous live happily  
Both in this world and the next".

(*Dhammapāda Verse 168*)

Hearing these profound and sublime words of the Buddha the King comprehended the truth and attained the first stage of Sainthood. Thereafter he took the Buddha's bowl and conducting Him and his disciples to the palace served them with a palatable and sumptuous meal. After the meal, the Blessed One instructed and inspired the King with these illuminating words:

“Lead a righteous life, and not one that is corrupt.  
The righteous live happily both in this world and in  
the next.

(*Dhammapada Verse 169*)

At the end of these memorable words the light of wisdom further dawned on him and he attained the second stage of saint-hood “*Sakadāgāmi*”. Before long he attained the third stage of sanctity—“*Anāgāmi*” and on his death bed the Buddha expounded the *Dhamma* to him and through a flash of insight he perceived the glorious truth of *Nibbāna* and attained *Arahatship*.

### PRINCESS YASODHARA'S CONVERSION

The next greatest incident which was connected with the Buddha's visit to Kapilavattu was the conversion of His former wife, Yasodharā to Buddhism. With the Buddha's guidance and instructions she reached the sublime heights of *Arahatship* and distinguished herself among women disciples as the chief of those who attained great super-normal powers—“*Mahā-Abhiññā*”.

When the King entertained the Buddha and His disciples in the palace, all but Princess Yasodharā came to pay their reverence to him. Yasodharā was in her apartment dressed in mean garments and her hair shorn. When the Buddha entered she was, from the abundance of her affection, like an overflowing vessel, unable to contain herself. Forgetting that the man whom she loved was the Buddha, the Lord of the world, she held him by his feet and wept bitterly. Remembering, however that Suddhodana was present, she felt ashamed and rose up seating herself reverently at a little distance. The King apologised for the princess, saying “Lord”, when my daughter heard that you were wearing yellow robes, she also robed herself in yellow; when she heard that you were taking one meal a day, she also did the same; when she heard that you had given up lofty couches, she lay on a low couch; when she heard that you had given up garlands and scents, she also gave them up; when her relatives sent messages to say that they would maintain her, she did not pay heed to a single one. So virtuous was my daughter”.

"Not only in this last birth O king, but in a previous birth, too, she protected me and was devoted and faithful to me", remarked the Buddha and cited the *Candakinnara Jātaka* (*Jātaka Translation Vol. IV. p. 179 (No. 485)*). Recalling this past association with her, He consoled her and left the palace.

After the death of King Suddhodana, when Pajapati Gotami became a nun (*Bhikkhuni*) Yasodharā also entered the Order and attained *Arahatship*.

### BUDDHA'S SON BECOMES A MONK

The next significant event was the conversion of his seven year old son, prince Rāhula. When he was sent by his mother to ask for his heritage from the Buddha, the only heritage he could give was to ordain him. This happened on the seventh day after His arrival at Kapilavatthu. Yasodhara gaily dressed up her young and handsome son and pointing to the Buddha exclaimed: "This holy man, whose appearance is so glorious that He looks like the great Brahma, is your father. He possesses four great mines of wealth which I have not yet seen. Go to him and entreat him to put you in possession of them for the son ought to inherit the property of the father. Rāhula then went to the Buddha, and looking up on his face said without fear and with much affection: "My father" and standing near by him, he added "O Shramana, even your shadow is a place of bliss".

When the *Tathāgata* had finished His repast, he gave blessings and went away from the palace, but Rāhula followed and asked his father for his inheritance.

No one prevented the boy, nor did the Blessed One Himself. Then the Blessed One turned to Venerable Sāriputta, saying: "My son asks for his inheritance. I cannot give him perishable treasures that will bring cares and sorrows, But I can give him the inheritance of a holy life, which is a treasure that will not perish".

Addressing Rāhula with earnestness, the Blessed One said: "Gold, Silver and Jewels have I none. But if you are willing to receive spiritual treasures, and you are strong



enough to carry them and to keep them, I shall give you the Four Truths which will lead you on the Eightfold Path of Righteousness. Do you desire to be admitted to the Brotherhood of those who devote their life to the culture of the mind seeking for the highest bliss attainable?" And Rāhula replied with firmness: "I do". Rahula who was only seven years old then was admitted into the Noble Order.

How a young boy of seven years could lead the Holy Life is almost inconceivable. But *Sāmanera* (Novice) Rāhula, cultured, exceptionally obedient and well-disciplined as he was, was very eager to accept instructions from his superiors. It is stated that he would rise early in the morning and taking a handful of sand throw it up, saying "Today may I receive from my instructors as much counsel as these grains of sand!"

#### BUDDHA'S SERMONS TO RAHULA

One of the earliest discourses preached to him immediately after his ordination, was the *Ambalatthika-Rāhulovāda Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya* No. 61), in which He emphasised the importance of Truthfulness.

One day the Buddha visited Rahula, who seeing Him coming from afar, arranged a seat and supplied water for washing the feet. The Buddha washed His feet and leaving a small quantity of water in the vessel, said "Do you see, Rahula, this small quantity of water left in the vessel?"

"Yes, Lord".

"Similarly, Rāhula, insignificant, indeed, is the *Samanaship* (monkhood) of those who are not ashamed of uttering deliberate lies".

Then the Buddha threw away that small quantity of water, and said:

"Discard, indeed, is the *Samanaship* of those who are not ashamed of deliberate lying.



The Buddha turned the vessel upside down, and said—  
“Overturned, indeed, is the *Samanashīp* of those who are not ashamed of uttering deliberate lies”.

Finally the Buddha set the vessel upright and said—  
“Empty and void, indeed, is the *Samanashīp* of those who are not ashamed of deliberate lying”.

“I say of anyone who is not ashamed of uttering deliberate lies, that there is no evil that could not be done by him. Accordingly, Rāhula, thus should you train yourself—  
“Not even in play will I tell a lie”.

### CRITERION OF BUDDHIST MORALITY

Emphasizing the importance of truthfulness with such homely illustrations, the Buddha explained to him the value of reflection and the criterion of morality in such a way as a child could understand.

“Rāhula, for what purpose is a mirror?” questioned the Buddha.

“For the purpose of reflecting, Lord”.

“Similarly, Rāhula, after reflecting and reflecting should bodily action be done; after reflecting should verbal action be done; after reflecting should mental action be done”.

“Whatever action you desire to do with the body, of that particular bodily action you should reflect: ‘Now, this action that I desire to perform with the body would this, my bodily action, be conducive to my own harm, or to the harm of others, or to that of both myself and others?’ Then, unskilful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain”.

“If, when reflecting, you should realise: ‘Now, this bodily action of mine that I am desirous of performing, would be conducive to my own harm or to the harm of others, or to that of both myself and others’. Then unskilful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain. Such an action with the body, you must on no account perform”.

“If, on the other hand, when reflecting you realise: ‘Now, this bodily action that I am desirous of performing, would be conducive neither to the harm of myself, nor to that of others, nor to that of both myself and others’. Then skilful is this bodily action, entailing pleasure and producing happiness. Such bodily action you should perform.

Exhorting the Sāmanera Rāhula to use reflection during and after one’s actions, the Buddha said:

“While you are engaged in an action with the body of that particular action should you reflect: ‘Now, is this action that I am doing with my body conducive to my own harm, or to the harm of others or to that of both myself and others?’ Then unskilful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain”. “If, when reflecting, you realise: ‘Now, this action that I am doing with my body is conducive to my own harm, to the harm of others, and to that of both myself and others’. Then unskilful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain. From such bodily action you must desist”.

“If, when reflecting, you should realise: ‘Now, this action of mine that I am doing with the body is conducive neither to my own harm, nor to the harm of others, nor to that of both of myself and others’. Then skilful, is this bodily action, entailing pleasure and happiness. Such a bodily action you should do again and again”.

The Buddha adds: “If, when reflecting, you should realise: ‘Now, this action that I have done is unskilful’. Such action should be confessed, revealed, and made manifest to the Teacher, or to the learned, or to your brethren of the Holy Life. Having confessed, you should restrain yourself in the future”.

The admonition with regard to skilful and unskilful verbal and mental actions was treated in the same way.

Stating that constant reflection was essential for purification, the Buddha ended the discourse as follows:

“Thus must you train yourself—By constantly reflecting shall we purify our bodily actions, by constantly reflecting shall we purify our verbal actions, by constantly reflecting shall we purify our mental actions”.

In the *Samyutta Nikāya* there is a special chapter where the Buddha explains to Sāmanera Rāhula the transitoriness of nature (*Samyutta Nikāya ii*, pp. 244-253).

### BUDDHA'S ADMONITION TO RĀHULA

As Rāhula entered the Order in his boyhood the Buddha availed Himself of every opportunity to advise and guide him on the right path. The *Sutta Nipāta* states that the Buddha repeatedly admonished him with the following stanzas (*Chalmers' Buddha's Teachings*, p. 81):—

“Leave pleasure's fivefold strands,—so sweet, so dear;  
And, led by Faith, leave home, to end all ills.  
Choose worthy friends; a distant lodging seek,  
Remote and quiet; sparing be in food  
And raiment, alms, the requisites, and bed.  
Crave not for these, lest back to earth thou come.  
Obey the code; control thy senses five;  
Watch well the body; grow to loathe the world.  
Forsake the gay appearance of things,  
Where passion reigns. In things austere, not gay,  
School thou thy heart to fixity and calm.  
Foster what harbours no appearances.  
Discard all trend to pride; pride comprehend  
And thou shall go thy way serene and calm”.

### SERMON ON MIND-CULTURE

In Rāhula's eighteenth year the Buddha preached a profound discourse on mind-culture, the occasion for it being a lustful thought that arose in his mind on account of his handsome appearance. One day Rāhula was following the Buddha in quest of alms. As the Buddha went along, followed by Rāhula, it seems that the pair was like

an auspicious royal elephant and his noble offspring, a royal swan with its beauteous cygnet, a regal lion with its stately cub. Both were golden in complexion almost equal in beauty; both were of the warrior caste, both had renounced a throne. Rāhula, admiring the Teacher, thought: "I too am handsome like my parent the Exalted One. Handsome is the Buddha's form, and mine is similar (*Majjhima Nikāya* No. 62).

The Buddha instantly read his evil thought, and looking back addressed him thus:

"Whatsoever form there be, should be regarded thus:

"This is not mine (*N'etaṃ mama*); this am I not (*Ne so'ham asmi*); this is not my soul (*Na me so attā*)". (*Anatallakkhana Sutta*, ch. 6).

Rāhula submissively inquired of Him whether he should regard only form as such.

The Buddha replied that he should regard all the five aggregates (*Khandhas*) as such.

Rāhula, having been thus edified by the Buddha Himself, preferred not to enter the village for alms. He turned back and sat at the foot of a tree, with legs crossed, the body held erect, intent on mindfulness.

Venerable Sāriputta noting the suggestive posture of Rāhula Samanera, advised him to concentrate on inhaling and exhaling, not knowing that he was practising another subject of meditation on the instruction of the Buddha.

Rāhula was perplexed because he was given two different subjects of meditation—one by the Buddha and the other by his own teacher. In obedience to his teacher he concentrated on "breathing" and went to the Buddha to get His own instructions on the subject. As a wise physician would give the needed medicine, ignoring the patient's desires, the Buddha first expanded His brief instruction on meditation on form and other aggregates and then briefly enum-



erated certain subjects of meditation with the specific evil conditions temporarily eliminated by each and then explained the meditation on "respiration" (*Anāpāna-sati*).

### RĀHULA ATTAINS ARAHATSHIP

Acting according to the Buddha's instructions, he succeeded in his meditations, and, before long, hearing the *Cūla-Rahulovāda Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya* No. 147), he attained *Arahatship*.

In the fourteenth year after the Enlightenment of the Buddha, *Sāmanera Rāhula* received his Higher Ordination.

He predeceased the Buddha and Venerable *Sāriputta*.

Venerable *Rāhula* was distinguished for his high standard of discipline. The following four verses are attributed to him in the *Theragāthā*:—

"Twice blest of fortune am I whom my friends  
Call 'Lucky Rāhula'—For I am both  
Child of the Buddha and a Seer of Truths;  
Yea, and intoxicants are purged from me;  
Yea, and there's no more coming back to be.  
Ar'hant am I worthy of men's offerings;  
'Thrice skilled' my ken is of ambrosial things"

"Blinded are beings by their sense-desires.  
Spread o'er them like a net; covered are they  
By cloak of craving, by their heedless ways  
Caught as a fish in mouth of funnel-net,  
But I, that call of sense abandoning,  
Have cut and snapt the bonds of devil's lure.  
Craving with craving's root abolishing;  
Cool am I now; extinct is fever's fire".<sup>1</sup>

(*Psalms of the Brethren*, p. 183)

### CONVERSION OF PRINCE NANDA

The fourth significant event was the Conversion of Prince Nanda, the son of Queen *Mahā Pajāpati Gotami*, who was

1. The Life and Teachings of the Buddha by Ven. Nārada Thera pp. 135-138.



celebrating his consecration ceremony, marriage ceremony, and the house-warming ceremony. It was on the occasion of these three festivals when congratulations were being offered to the prince that the Buddha visited the palace. After the meal the Buddha handed the bowl to the prince and uttering a Blessing, rose to go without taking the bowl.

The prince followed Him thinking that the Buddha would take the bowl from him at any moment. But the Buddha would not take it, and the prince out of reverence for Him continued to follow the Teacher.

Janapada Kalyāṇi, to whom he was betrothed, hearing that the prince was following the Buddha with bowl in hand, with tears streaming down her face and hair half-combed, ran after Prince Nanda as fast as she could and said to him: "Return quickly, O noble Lord!" These affectionate words penetrated his heart and he was deeply moved, but with deference to the Buddha he could not possibly return the bowl to Him. So he accompanied the Buddha to the park, His temporary residence. On arrival there the Buddha questioned Nanda whether he would become a monk. So great was his reverence for Him, as the Buddha and as an elder brother of his, that, with reluctance, he agreed to be admitted into the Order.

But Nanda *Bhikkhu* enjoyed no spiritual happiness resulting from renunciation. He was greatly depressed, and was constantly thinking of his bride. He related his mental troubles to the *Bhikkhus* saying: "Brethren, I am dissatisfied. I am now living the Religious Life, but I cannot endure to lead the Holy Life any longer. I intend to abandon the higher precepts and return to the lower life, the life of a layman".

Hearing this the Buddha questioned Venerable Nanda whether such a report was true. He admitted his weakness, and stated that He was worried about his bride.

### BUDDHA'S METHOD OF PREACHING

The Buddha devised a means to set him on the right path. With the object of showing him celestial nymphs the Buddha, using His psychic powers, took him to the Tāva-

timsa Heaven. On the way the Venerable Nanda was shown a singed she-monkey who had lost her ears, nose and tail in a fire, clinging to a burnt-up stump in a scorched field. Reaching heaven, the Buddha pointed to him celestial nymphs and asked him: "Nanda, which do you regard as being the more beautiful and fair to look upon and handsome—your noble wife Janapada Kalyāni or the celestial nymphs?"

"Venerable Sir, Janapada Kalyāni is like the singed monkey when compared to those celestial nymphs, who are infinitely more beautiful and fair".

"Cheer up, Nanda. I guarantee that you will possess them if you persevere as I bid you?

"In that case I shall take the greatest pleasure in living the Holy Life", said Venerable Nanda childishly.

Hearing that Venerable Nanda was living the Holy Life with the object of winning celestial nymphs, the *Bhikkhus* ridiculed him calling him "hireling". Eventually he became ashamed of his base motive, and striving diligently, attained *Arahatship*.

He thereupon approached the Buddha and said "Venerable Sir, I release the Exalted One from the promise that He made when He guaranteed that I should win celestial nymphs".

The Buddha replied: "When Nanda, you ceased to cling to the things of the world, and your heart was released from the Corruptions, at that moment I was released from that promise".

He then uttered the following paean of joy:

"He that has crossed over the mud and crushed the thorn of lust.

He that has destroyed delusion, such a man is unmoved whether in pleasure or in pain".

When some monks doubted his attainment of *Arahatship* the Buddha in explanation uttered the following stanzas:

"Even as rain penetrates an ill-thatched house, so does lust penetrate an undeveloped mind".

"Even as rain does not penetrate a well-thatched house, so does lust not penetrate a well-developed mind". (*Dhammapada Verses 13-14*).

Enjoying the bliss of Emancipation, he praised the Teacher, saying: "O excellent is the method of the Master, whereby I was drawn out of the mire of rebirth and set on Nibbana's strand!"

*Theragātha* attributes the following verses to him:

"Heedless and shallow once my thoughts were set  
On all the bravery of outward show;  
Fickle was I and frivolous; all my days  
Were worn with wanton sensuality.  
But by the Buddha's skilful art benign,  
Who of sun's lineage cometh, was I brought  
To live by deeper thought, whereby my heart,  
From (the great swamp of endless) life I drew".  
(*Psalm of the Brethren. p. 127*)

Venerable Nanda Thera was placed chief amongst disciples in respect of self-control.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The Life and Teachings of the Buddha by Ven. Nārada Thera  
pp. 140-143.

## BAK POYA

The *Bak Poya* which falls on the full moon day in the month of April commemorates the second visit of the Buddha to Ceylon which took place in the fifth year of His Enlightenment when He was residing at Jetavanārama in Sāvattthi. This visit was to Nāgadipa to settle a quarrel between the two Nāgas, Mahodara and Culodara, an uncle and a nephew in regard to a gem-set throne. Seeing the disaster that could have befallen the rival parties, out of compassion for them, the Buddha visited the place in time to save them all. Having occupied a place overlooking the battle-field the Buddha preached to them the doctrine that begets concord. It is said that at the end of the sermon, both Mahodara and Culodara jointly presented the throne, which they both longed for, to the Buddha, as it was the most valuable gift they could offer to the Master.

The Nāga king Maniakkhika of Kalyāni, who had come there to take part in the battle, approached the Buddha and said, "Oh Lord, great is the compassion Thou hast shown us. Had thou, Oh Lord, not come, we would have all been consumed to ashes. May the Lord have compassion towards me and visit my Kingdom". The Buddha accepted the invitation of King Maniakkhika. Having established peace the Buddha returned to Jetavanāramaya. (*Mahāvansa*). It is therefore in the fitness of things that one should discuss the concept of peace in Buddhism in this chaotic, war-weary, restless world of today, where nations are arming themselves to the teeth, frightened of one another, where human life is endangered by nuclear weapons which may be released at any moment.

## MESSAGE OF PEACE

The world is sorely in need of the Message of Universal Peace and Tolerance and Loving Kindness so that all may live in one world in perfect peace and harmony like brothers and sisters. Is it practically possible to have peace and radiate thoughts of loving-kindness when one is threatened



with devastating bombs and other destructive weapons? Well, what can both powerful and powerless people do when bombs rain from above? Can they avert such a catastrophe?

Peace and Loving-Kindness and Tolerance preached in Buddhism are the only answer to such deadly bombs when one is faced with inexorable death. If all war-like nations could be prevailed upon to practise Loving-Kindness in place of producing destructive weapons of materialism, and rule the world not with tyranny and brute force but with justice and Love, then only would there be genuine happiness and peace in this world.

Throughout a period of over two thousand five hundred years, Buddhism has been a religion of peace and tolerance. The benign influence of the Buddha's immortal message has permeated the hearts and minds of suffering humanity like a beacon light in the shifting sands of time. To the unique credit of Buddhism it could be said that not a drop of blood has been shed in the propagation of its sublime and noble teachings. No mighty monarch has wielded his powerful sword to propagate the teachings, and no conversion has been made either by force or by repulsive methods. Buddhism spread through its own intrinsic merit and unsurpassing beauty. The doctrine is saturated with the spirit of free inquiry and complete tolerance. It is indeed the teaching of the open mind and the sympathetic heart. The Buddha's incomparable love blazes forth like the rays of the glorious sun and sheds its benign glow on all beings alike without any invidious distinction whatsoever. In fact every morning and in the afternoon the Blessed One attained to the ecstasy of GREAT COMPASSION (*Mahā-Karunā-Samāpatti*) and extended his boundless compassion to all beings and surveyed the world with His Divine Eye to see to whom he could render spiritual consolation and



assistance. This He did throughout His long dispensation of forty-five years, which is indeed unique in the annals of history. This noble sentiment is graphically and eloquently expressed by the Buddha in the following terms:—

### HIGHEST WORLDLY MERIT

“Monks, whatever kinds of worldly merit there are, all are not worth one sixteenth part of the heart deliverance of loving-kindness; in shining and beaming and radiance the heart deliverance of loving-kindness far excels them. Just as whatever light there is of stars, all is not worth one sixteenth part of the moon’s light; in shining and beaming and radiance the moon’s light far excels it; and just as in the last month of the Rains, in the Autumn when the heavens are clear the sun as it climbs the heavens drives all darkness from the sky with its shining and beaming radiance: and just as, when night is turning to dawn, the Morning Star is shining and beaming and radiating: so too, whatever kinds of worldly merit there are, all are not worth one sixteenth part of the heart-deliverance of loving-kindness: in shining and beaming and radiance the heart-deliverance of loving-kindness far excels them”.  
(*Itivuttaka* 27).

Nehru eloquently bears testimony to the sentiments expressed above when he says: “Humanity has to choose today between the message of the Buddha and the hydrogen bomb. There is nothing in between to choose from. I have enough faith in me to bow my head down when the Buddha’s name is mentioned. It is rather easy to talk and even to act, in the international sphere, and it is more difficult to face problems nearer home. But unless the message of the Buddha is applied in the national and domestic field, it might not be capable of application elsewhere. The path which the Buddha and Asoka had shown has not been forgotten and has somehow remained in the mind of India. Mahatmā Gāndhī followed the same path in our lifetime and by following that path the prestige and the strength of the nation was raised. *It will be an error to regard the message of peace and non-violence of the Buddha as something only to be talked about with no connection with our everyday affairs.* The message is not only to be confined to

saints only but has to be related to our everyday life. Non-violence practised by us will give us strength in our day to day work. If any question has to be considered it has to be considered peacefully and democratically in the way taught by the Buddha".

It was this immortal message of peace and happiness that was introduced into this sacred Isle by Arahāt Mahinda.

### PRINCE OF PEACE

One of the exalted appellations of the Buddha is *Santi-rāja* or the Prince of Peace, and the Path leading to the ultimate bliss of Nibbāna is known as the *Sānti-magga* (the Path of Peace), and above all the transcendent reality Nibbāna is described as *sānti*—peace. In fact the concept of peace occupies a pre-eminent place in the teachings of the Buddha. The whole of the Buddha's teachings is permeated and saturated with the spirit of peace, compassion and happiness. The leading of the good life, indeed, should be in consonance with peaceful and harmonious living (*Samā-cariya*) with one's fellow-beings. And it was for this purpose that the Buddha for the first time in the known history of mankind established the kingdom of righteousness (*Dhamma-Cakkha*) for the good and happiness of mankind. And furthermore, after the establishment of the kingdom of Righteousness the Buddha before long succeeded in enlightening sixty disciples and decided to send them as messengers of peace, requesting that no two of them were to go in the same direction. They were to preach the Dhamma which is glorious in the beginning, glorious in the middle, and glorious in the end. And the key-note of that message was Peace and Goodwill and Happiness to mankind. These words of goodwill and peace are the recurrent themes throughout the Buddhist texts, and they run like golden threads throughout the vast and comprehensive body of Buddhist literature.

### LOVING KINDNESS

The *Dhammapāda*, one of the gems of Buddhist literature, succinctly states: "Hatred does not cease by hatred. Hatred ceases by love alone. This is the eternal law. A characteristic quality of the Buddha's teachings which promotes

concord, amity and harmony is that ennobling and heart-emancipating virtue of goodwill and loving kindness. It is that rare and precious quality of the heart and mind which knows, understands and is ready to help. Love more than any other quality promotes peace, maturity and understanding among people and this virtue is a rare commodity these days when there is so much of animosity, resentment, hatred and violence among the peoples of various communities and creeds. We adopt an antagonistic and competitive attitude towards others mainly because of ignorance. This is as true on the personal as it is on the international level. Despite all our avowals of mutual benevolence and goodwill, we humans in our dealings with each other, behave very much as the other animals do. We growl and bite, or cringe and fawn as the occasion demands. At the risk of appearing cynical one may say that this will always be true of humanity not only in the mass but in the highest circles of society.

"The mark of a mature man" says Rabbi Leo Baeck, "is the ability to give love and to receive it—joyously and without guilt". He lived up to this aphorism through the long dark years when he and his people were persecuted by the Nazis. He survived all the horrors of the concentration camp and preserved his faith in human nature. "So many people go through life", he says "filling their minds with ignoble memories; a grudge here, a jealousy or a pettiness there. Man's true task is to create for himself a mind filled with grandeur, forgiveness and the dynamic ethical ferment preached by all religions at their best". When an individual begins to see things as they really are, when he begins to understand his fellow beings, he begins to love them in the highest sense. Far from being antagonistic and competitive to others, his attitude becomes friendly and helpful. He neither strikes his fellows nor does he cling to them. He wishes them well, helps them when he can and lets them be.

### BENEFITS OF LOVING-KINDNESS

The value and intrinsic worth of a teaching is judged to the extent that it is able to give practical and beneficial results to man by way of happiness and peace of mind.



The Buddha Dhamma makes such a bold assertion in unequivocal terms as the teaching is productive of immediate results, verifiable by one in this life itself. Such a claim is not made by the Buddha anywhere in the Buddhist texts, in such grand and bold words showing the manifold benefits accruing to one who practises this virtue assiduously, and which would eventually lead to peace, harmony, amity and concord among peoples of the world—

“If, O monks, all-embracing kindness, the liberation of mind, has been cultivated and developed, made one’s vehicle and foundation, is firmly established, brought to greatness and full perfection, one may expect an eleven-fold blessing :

One sleeps peacefully; awakes peacefully; has no evil dreams; is dear to men; is dear to spirits; heavenly beings protect one; fire, poison and weapons cannot do any harm, the scattered mind becomes composed; one’s features brighten up; one will have an untroubled death; and if one does not penetrate higher, one will be reborn in the Brahma-World”. (*Anguttara Nikāya XI 16*).

It was in keeping with the noble sentiments of goodwill and peace taught in Buddhism that King Asoka was inspired to send missionaries to various parts of the world carrying the benign message of peace to suffering humanity. Indeed, the chastening effect of the *Dhamma* on the life of King Asoka was such that he gave up “reverberation of war-drums” for the noble conquest by the reverberation of the drums of the *Dhamma*. The profound and indelible influence of the Buddha’s teaching on Asoka could be gauged from the fact that he says, “All men are my children and as I desire for my children that they obtain every kind of wealth and happiness both in this world and in the next, so do I desire for all men”.

Here indeed was a mighty king, unique in the annals of history, who on his conversion to Buddhism gave up military conquests as an instrument of policy not after defeat but after victory. He verily realised, as the *Dham-*

*mapāda* says, "Victory brings hatred; for the conquered sleep in sorrow; casting away victory and defeat, the peaceful one dwells at ease (*Dhammapāda* verse 207) and further he realised in the words of the *Samyutta Nikāya* "the conqueror gets someone who conquers him", (*Samyutta Nikāya* 185).

Buddha's conception of peace and goodwill is such that it has no limitations or boundaries confined within the limits of space and time, but blazes forth like the rays of the glorious sun in all directions of space encompassing within its fold all beings existing in the different world systems in the unfathomable depths of space. It is cosmical, boundless and immeasurable. The Buddha says; "He abides, letting his mind fraught with love, pervade one quarter of the world, and so also the second quarter, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around, and everywhere, and altogether does he continue to pervade with love-burdened thought, abounding, sublime and beyond measure, free from hatred and ill-will. He abides letting his mind, fraught with compassion.....delightfulness.....equanimity.....".

### BUDDHA'S TOLERANCE

The compassion and tolerance of the Buddha are well demonstrated and eloquently expressed by Him in His lifetime.

On one occasion a rich millionaire called Upāli, a follower of Nigantha Nataputta, approached the Blessed One and was so pleased with the exposition of an illuminating discourse that he immediately expressed his desire to become his follower. But the Buddha advised him saying, "Of a verity, O householder, make a thorough investigation. It is well for a distinguished man like you to make a thorough investigation". Upāli was so overwhelmed with joy at this unexpected utterance of the Buddha that he expressed the view that he had been a follower of another teacher, the disciples of such a teacher would have taken him round the streets in procession with so much trumpeting and fanfare. On the other hand, said Upāli, the Buddha had advised him to investigate further and he was so pleased



with this kindly tolerance of the Buddha that he took refuge in the Triple Gem and became a convert. In keeping with His boundless compassion and perfect tolerance, the Buddha further advised Upāli to continue to support his former religious teacher. (*Upāli Sutta 56 of Majjhima Nikāya*).

It is verily this spirit of kindly tolerance and boundless compassion which epitomises the life and teaching of the Buddha.

Buddhism does not claim the monopoly of truth and does not condemn any other religion. It never claimed exclusive, absolute or totalitarian authority. This fact is clearly borne out in the Buddha's admonition to His disciples not to be upset and angry or discontented and displeased, even when others spoke ill of Him or of His teaching or of His Order. Said the Buddha: "If anyone were to find fault or abuse me or the Doctrine or the Noble Order, do not, monks, for that matter, be offended, displeased or ruffled. If you by any means become offended or perturbed it will be to your own harm. On the other hand, whenever people hurl abuse and criticize, you should pause and think whether what they say contains some truth or whether what they say is just slander and false. Likewise, monks, if someone were to praise and glorify me, the Doctrine, or the Noble Order, you should not for that matter feel particularly elated or pleased. If you do so it will be to your own harm. On the contrary in such an event you should pause and examine the truth of the matter. You should find out whether what they say is actually to be found in us and whether they are correct". (*Brahmajāla Sutta No. 1 of Dīgha Nikāya*) A most enlightened and noble sentiment indeed!

This equanimity, this natural rising above both likes and dislikes, as well as his emphasis on searching for the truth, characterizes the Buddha's tolerance towards all men based upon inner strength and firm conviction. For the inherently weak there can be no real tolerance, there can be only servility and helplessness. It is only the strong who can possess the noble quality of equanimity, of tolerance towards all men.

Denouncing unfair criticism of other faiths, the Buddha states; "It is as a man who looks up and spits at Heaven—the spittle does not soil the Heaven, but it comes back and defiles his own person".

The Buddha was so tolerant that He did not even exercise the power to give Commandments to the followers. Instead of using the imperative, He said, "It behoves you to do this. It behoves you not to do that". He commands not, but exhorts.

### COME AND SEE

The Buddha's doctrine is the Doctrine of "Come and See". He advises seekers of Truth not to accept anything merely on the authority of another but to exercise their own reasoning and judge for themselves whether a thing is right or wrong. Addressing the Kālāmas on one occasion, the Buddha says; "Yes, O Kālāmas, it is right for you to doubt, it is right for you to waver. In a doubtful matter, wavering has arisen" and follows this remark further with the advice; "Come, O Kālāmas, Do not accept anything on mere hearsay (i.e. thinking that thus have we heard it for a long time). Do not accept anything by mere tradition (i.e. thinking that it has thus been handed down through many generations). Do not accept anything on account of rumours (i.e. by believing what others say without any investigation). Do not accept anything just because it accords with your scriptures. Do not accept anything by mere supposition. Do not accept anything by mere inference. Do not accept anything by merely considering the appearances. Do not accept anything merely because it agrees with your preconceived notions. Do not accept anything because it seems acceptable (i.e. should be accepted). Do not accept anything, thinking that the ascetic is respected by us (and therefore it is right to accept his word). But when you know for yourselves—these things are immoral, these things are blameworthy, these things are censured by the wise, these things, when performed and undertaken, conducive to ruin and sorrow—then indeed do you reject them. When you know for yourselves—these things are moral these things are blameless, these things are praised by the wise, these things, when performed and undertaken con-

duce to well-being and happiness—then do you live and act accordingly". (*Anguttara Nikāya Vol. I, page 189*). These wise sayings of the Buddha uttered some 2500 years ago still retain their original force and freshness even in this enlightened twentieth century. Moreover, these noble sentiments are conducive to peace, harmony and concord among mankind.

## WAR AND PEACE

The first recorded incident of a religious teacher of not only preaching against war, but actually intervening and preventing war is attributed to the Buddha. In fact it is the first practical lesson in *Ahimsā* in the field of politics. He is indeed the Lord of Peace (*Sānti Nāyaka*). One day on the banks of the River Rohini there were thousands of women weeping—some for their husbands and some for their fathers, brothers and other near and dear ones. In such a pathetic situation the Buddha intervened and saved them all. And he saved Rohini from being a river of blood.

This was the incident in connection with the kings of two realms who were making war-like preparations to destroy each other because they could not agree on dividing the waters for their use. The conversation that ensued between the Buddha and the rival parties was thus. The Master asked:

"How much, O Kings, is water worth?"

"Water, O Lord, is worth very little",

"How much is this earth worth?"

"The earth, O Lord, is of great worth".

"How worth are kings?"

"Kings also are of great worth, O Lord".

"How much are your queens worth?"

"They also are greatly dear, O Lord".

"How much worth, O kings, is your blood-bond asked the Buddha at last.

"That, O Lord, is a thing even as great as Mount Meru to us", replied they all with one accord. And thus the Buddha said unto them .

"Why O ye good men, destroy all these kings worth the world, these loved queens and the blood-bond which are more than all for the sake of a little water that flows into the sea and is worthless".

The light of wisdom dawned on them when these words were heard, and unwittingly their weapons fell to the ground, and they remained silent and non-plussed as they hadrealised the utter stupidity of their actions. Then the Buddha addressed them thus: "Good kings, why do you act in this manner? Had I not come to you today you would have set flowing a river of blood". These words acted like a balm upon their tormented minds, and the Buddha then expressed these sublime stanzas:

"Happily live we, free from all hatred among hating  
ones;  
Among men burning with hatred happily live we,  
With hearts of love". (*Dhammapada* verse 197).

"Full happy we live, free from all ailment  
Even among those ailing sore,  
Among men sore-stricken with disease,  
Full of ease do we dwell".  
(*Dhammapada* verse 198).

"Full happy live we, among the hankering,  
From all hankering free,  
Among men who ever hanker, free of all  
Hankering do we dwell".  
(*Dhammapada* verse 199).

The Buddha is verily the Lord of Peace, and as Fielding Hall, writing of Buddhist Burma, says in his beautiful book "The Soul of a People":

"There can never be a war of Buddhism. No ravished country has ever borne witness to the prowess of the followers of the Buddha; no murdered men have poured out their blood on their hearth stones, killed in His name; no ruined women have cursed His name to high heaven. He and His faith are clean of the



stain of blood. He was the Preacher of the Great Peace, of love, of charity, of compassion and so clear is His teaching that it can never be misunderstood".

To remove the anti-social attitudes from the world the Buddha taught the four sublime states of Love, Pity, Sympathetic Joy and Equanimity.

### SUBLIME STATES

In Pali, the language of the Buddhist scriptures, these four are known under the name of *Brahma-Vihāra*. This term may be rendered by—excellent, lofty or sublime states of mind; or alternatively, by *Brahma-like*, god-like or divine abodes.

They are said to be excellent or sublime, because they are the right, or ideal way of conduct towards living beings (*sattesu sammā patipatti*). These four attitudes of mind provide in fact the answer to all situations arising from social contact. They are the great removers of tension, the great peace-makers in social conflict, the great healers of wounds suffered in the struggle of existence; levellers of social barriers, builders of harmonious communities, awakeners of slumbering magnanimity long forgotten, revivers of joy and hope long abandoned, promoters of human brotherhood against the forces of egotism.

They are incompatible with a hateful state of mind, and in that they are akin to *Brahma* who is conceived as the hateless one, in beneficial contrast to many other conceptions of deities, in East and West, who by their own devotees, are said to show anger, wrath, jealousy and "righteous indignation". He who assiduously develops these four Sublime States, by conduct and meditation, is said to become an equal of *Brahma* (*Brahmasamo*); and if they become the, dominant influence in his mind, he will be reborn in congenial worlds, the realms of *Brahma*. Therefore, these states of mind are called God-like, *Brahma-like*.

They are called Abodes (*vihāra*), because they should become mind's constant dwelling places where our minds feel "at home", they should not remain merely places of



rare and short visits, soon forgotten. In other words, our minds should become thoroughly saturated by them. They should become the inseparable companions of our days, and we should be mindful of them in all our common activities as far as they have any concern with these four mental attitudes. As the *Metta Sutta*, the Song of Loving-Kindness, puts it!

“When standing, walking, sitting, lying down,  
Whenever he feels free of tiredness,  
Let him establish well this mindfulness—  
This, it is said, is the Divine abode”.

These four—Love, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy and Equanimity—are also known as the boundless states (*appamaññā*), because in their perfection and their true nature, they should not be narrowed down by any limitation as to the range of beings towards which they are extended. They should be unexclusive and impartial, not bound by selective preferences or prejudices. A mind that has attained to that boundlessness of the *Brahmaviharas*, will not harbour any national, racial, religious or class-hatred. These noble qualities when practised will undoubtedly promote peace, happiness and amity among the peoples of the world.

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